Boxing WBA Heavyweight title

Holyfield shatters the Tyson myth

Frank Keating in Las Vegas

AN EERIE buzz of astonished disbelief was still swirling round the Nevada valleys and amid the crowds on the MGM Grand's gaming floors on Sunday morning.

Evander Holyfield not only beat Mike Tyson in Las Vegas on Saturday, he beat him up. It was an outcome that will reverberate around the world of boxing. It will sort out the monopoly of the eccentric despot Don King. Certainly it sorted out Tyson. When a merciful referee cried enough after 47 seconds of a climactic 11th round, the once awesome champion had not only lost his World Boxing Association heavyweight title but clearly surrendered his aura of invincibility as well.

This was no fluky one-punch aberration. Tyson was dismantled piece by piece, brick by brick and tile by tile. The three judges, two Americans and a Venezuelan, all had Holyfield miles in front (96-92, 96-92, 100-93) when the end came.

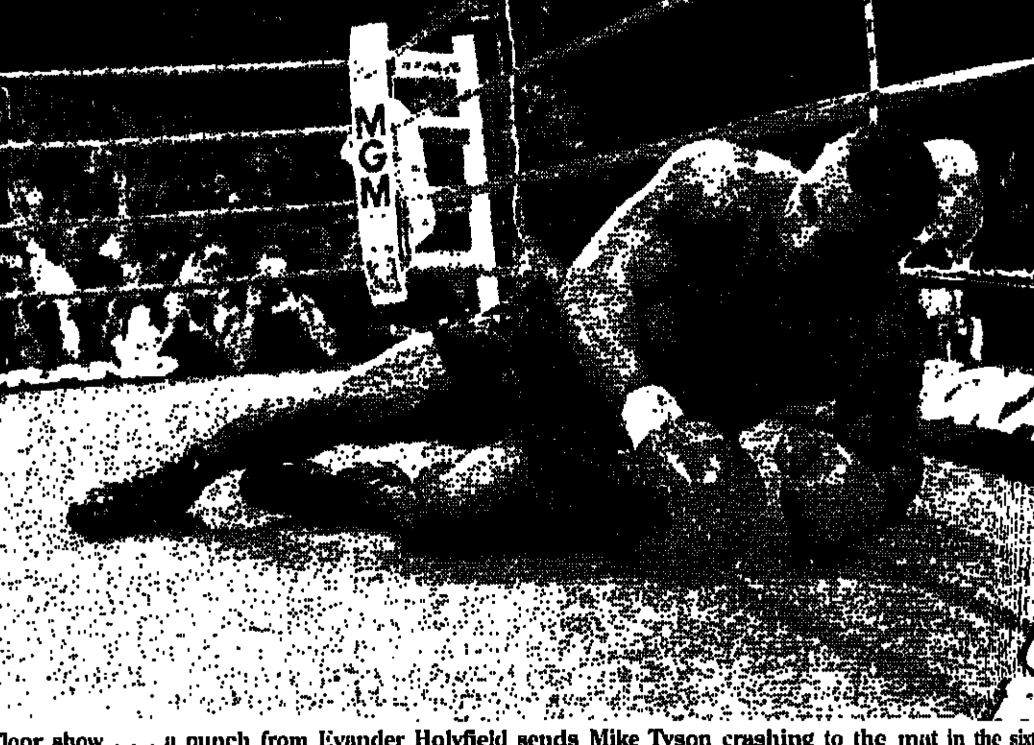
Holyfield dedicated his victory to God, and in sporting terms it was a victory blessed by all the gods. From the first bell Holyfield gave as good as he got. The bully was outbullied, and then he was hit some more.

Tyson was still on his feet at the end, but it was obvious his feet did not know where they were. Even to the throng in the distant bleachers it was plain to see that a semi-conscious fighter was receiving the sort of comeuppance he had inflicted on others so often in the past. Shock, horror.

Holyfield fought with a savage and clinically sadistic concentration that made snarling mock of the 15-1 bookmakers' odds against him. Long before the end Tyson was fighting on instinct, and in fairness to his ultimately deranged nobility his instinct remained full of a fighting man's gamecock courage. He took his medicine as a true champion should. Metaphorically, he was at least carried out on his shield.

Every time Tyson planted his feet right and squared up to throw one of his concussive left uppercuts or hooks, Holyfield simply smashed him in the face with a jackhammer right hand or socked him in the breadbasket to induce a grunting little squeal of pain and enforce a temporary retreat.

Tyson was helped away from the ring by two compassionate members of his surly entourage. The rest of them, in their cockily angled black Homburgs, seemed as dazed as their meal ticket and his previous admirers. The crowd remained silent as he left. Down the long corridor to the locker-room Tyson distractedly sucked at a white bloodstained towel, like a baby awakened in the night being led back to its cot.



Floor show . . . a punch from Evander Holyfield sends Mike Tyson crashing to the mat in the sixth round of the bout in Las Vegas PHOTOGRAPH: TEDDY BLACKBURN

More than an hour afterwards the former champion was befuddled still. With a touching chivalry he mumbled congratulations to Holyfield. "I take my hat off to you. I did my best. You did better. It was a great success for you."

● In a fight on the same bill, Henry Akinwande, the Londoner with the kind face and quick fists, scored another impressive win when he retained his World Boxing Organisation version of the heavyweight title by stopping the Russian southpaw Alexandre Zolkin in 10 rounds. Zolkin later needed more than 20 stitches in a cut eyebrow.

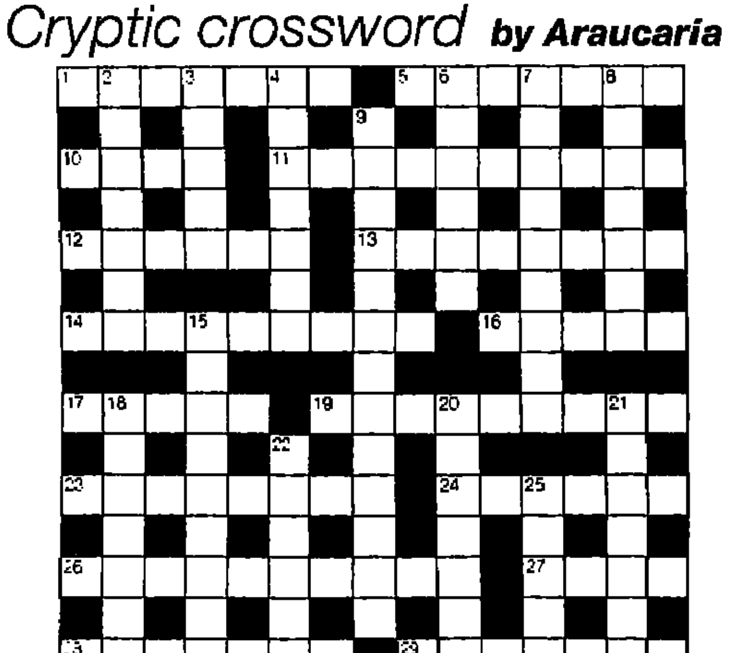
IBF heavyweight champion Michael Moorer of the United States repelled a challenge from South African Francois Botha with a 12th round stoppage victory.

In Manchester Naseem Hamed easily retained his WBO featherweight title. He lived up to his prediction of a second-round win against Argentine Remigio Molina by forcing a stoppage with 28 seconds to go before the bell.

Nigel Benn retired from boxing after losing to the WBO super-middleweight champion Steve Collins. Benn, from Ilford, Essex, looked a good match for the champion over the first three rounds but the extra power and stamina of Collins soon proved too much and he was pulled out by his corner at the end of six bruising rounds.

Ensley Bingham failed in his bid to wrest the WBO light-middleweight crown from Ronald Wright. The Mancunian had the backing of a 20,000 home crowd but was no match for the American champion, who dominated each round to win an overwhelming points decision.

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria



Across

1 How fairy can you get round a tree on the night of 23 17? (7)
5 Disconnected belligerent (7)
10 Centre of road network, source of 8s on 23 17 (4)
11 Pomade entertaining marshal to turn with topper (7-3)
12 Guy from the West among the inauthentic (6)
13 Romance left in the boxes? (4, 4)
14 The French island's secret exposed in a city (9)
16 See 15
17 See 23
19, 27 A little preparation wouldn't go amiss on 23 17 (9, 4)
23, 17 Time to celebrate venom removed by female if in bedroom (8, 5)
24 Locomotive plant for 23 17 (6)
26 Student gets one jewel — nothing crooked about it — it's a favour (10)
27 See 19
28 Regular soldier in hospital? (7)
29 10's woman has a little cicatrice (7)

Down

2 Pipe outside tank like the Big-endians' eggs (7)
3 Sport enthusiast often gets out (5)
4 Crass it may be to be such discriminating people (7)
6 Have power before old age arises and you snuff it (6)
7 One only rigged Arab ship — the rig doesn't matter (3, 3, 3)
8 Speech sound — give me a bell (7)
9 Not much mercy shown in Lilliputian ghetto? (6, 7)
15, 16 Pet, female, one with a shoe repair on 23 17 (9, 5)
18 Blunt instrument for drinks at the club? (4, 3)
20 Feverish sort of 1 gets a lot of credit (7)
21 Pooh's asinine friend cavorting round pole — not a pretty sight (7)
22 Come down face first, nearly sick with mad cow disease (6)
25 Cavort with saucy little morsel (5)

Last week's solution

C M D M W S A
PUTATIVE ESCAPE
L I E D L A I
STAN TRIALBRIEF
U E A D L C
GRIPER TWOFACED
E R E N T
ADJOURN VEHICLE
T A S N I
GINRUMMY CLAUSE
R A B R H T
CONCLUSIVE CREW
N T T N R I N
PELOTA GAUNTLET
R R N A B E R

Football World Cup results and tables

European Group One

Croatia 1, Greece 1; Slovenia 1, Bosnia 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Greece	4	2	1	1	7	3	7
Denmark	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
Croatia	2	1	1	0	5	2	4
Bosnia	3	1	0	2	3	8	3
Slovenia	3	0	0	3	1	6	0

Group Two

Georgia (0) .... 0 **England** (2) 2
Att: 48,000 — Sheringham 15, Ferdinand 37

Poland 2, Moldova 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	3	3	0	0	7	1	9
Italy	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
Poland	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Georgia	2	0	0	2	0	3	0
Moldova	3	0	0	3	2	8	0

Group Three

Azerbaijan 0, Hungary 3; Switzerland 0, Norway 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Norway	3	3	0	0	9	0	9
Switzerland	3	1	0	2	3	4	3
Hungary	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
Azerbaijan	3	1	0	2	1	8	3
Finland	2	0	0	2	2	4	0

Group Four

Scotland (1)...... 1 **Sweden** (0) 0
McGinlay 8 — Att: 46,738

Austria 2, Latvia 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Scotland	3	2	1	0	3	0	7
Austria	4	2	1	0	3	1	7
Sweden	4	2	0	2	7	4	6
Belarus	4	1	1	2	4	7	4
Estonia	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Latvia	4	0	1	3	3	7	1

Group Five

Cyprus 2, Israel 0, Luxembourg 0, Russia 4.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Russia	3	2	1	0	0	1	7
Israel	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Bulgaria	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Cyprus	2	1	0	1	2	4	3
Luxembourg	2	0	0	2	1	6	0

Group Six

Yugoslavia 1, Czech Republic 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Yugoslavia	4	4	0	0	18	2	[illegible]
Slovakia	3	3	0	0	11	1	[illegible]
Czech Republic	3	1	1	1	6	1	[illegible]
Spain	2	1	1	0	6	2	[illegible]
Faroe Islands	5	0	0	5	5	22	[illegible]
Malta	3	0	0	3	0	18	[illegible]

Group Seven

Holland (4) .... 7 **Wales** (1) 1
Bergkamp 22, 72, 78; R De Boer 33; Jonk 34; F De Boer 45; Cocu 61 — Saunders 40; Att: 25,000

Turkey 7, San Marino 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Netherlands	2	2	0	0	10	2	6
Belgium	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Wales	4	2	0	2	13	10	6
Turkey	2	1	0	1	8	2	3
San Marino	4	0	0	4	0	21	0

Group Eight

R of Ireland (0) .. 0 **Iceland** (0) 0
Att: 33,989

Liechtenstein 1, FYR Macedonia 11

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FYR Macedonia	4	2	1	1	16	5	7
Rep of Ireland	3	2	1	0	8	0	7
Romania	2	2	0	0	7	0	6
Lithuania	3	2	0	1	4	4	6
Iceland	4	0	2	2	1	7	2
Liechtenstein	4	0	0	4	2	21	0

Group Nine

Germany (1)...... 1 **N Ireland** (1) 1
Möller 40; Att: 40,718 — Taggart 39

Albania 1, Armenia 1; Portugal 1, Ukraine 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portugal	4	2	1	1	5	2	7
Ukraine	3	2	0	1	3	2	6
Germany	2	1	1	0	6	2	4
Armenia	4	0	3	1	3	7	3
N Ireland	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Albania	2	0	1	1	1	4	1

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Week ending November 24, 1996

The Washington Post · Le Monde



Indian salvage workers recover a body from the wreckage of the mid-air collision between two airliners, in which all 349 passengers and crew were killed. *Full story, page 3* PHOTOGRAPH: SHERWIN CRASTO

Full story, page 3

Rwanda refugees take road to hope

Chris McGreal in Goma

A FLOOD of Rwandans abandoned refugee camps in eastern Zaire last week and became a tidal wave over the weekend as hundreds of thousands of people cramming roads to the border descended on Goma.

Their return home followed the defeat by the Zairean rebels of the Hutu Interahamwe militias, whose grip over the refugees in Mugunga camp in eastern Zaire was finally broken on Friday last week.

"The road of death is now a road of hope," said Ray Wilkinson, of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, adding that the returnees were in good shape physically and seemed cheerful.

Despite the exodus from the camps, the United Nations Security Council approved a 10,000-strong Canadian-led force to ensure aid reaches the refugees, though its deployment was delayed this week as those countries contributing troops reconsidered the multinational force's objectives.

The United States and South Africa were reluctant volunteers and have seized on the mass migration as a sign that the force should be radically sized down or scrapped.

But President Jacques Chirac of France said Paris still believed multinational intervention was needed. Britain has also said it still expects at least part of the force to be deployed.

On the road to Goma last week the column of refugees stretched back 20 miles. Some people were carried on stretchers. A man with a withered leg hobbled along, clinging to a stick, his speed kept up only by the press of people around him.

Some discarded their identity cards perhaps out of fear of being fingered for their role in the slaughter two years ago.

The border proved a bottleneck as they poured through Goma. One woman gave birth while waiting to cross. About 500 children have been separated from their parents.

Some lessons have been learnt from 1994 when about 50,000 people died from cholera and other diseases as the refugees marched into Zaire. Crucially, water was swiftly to hand this time. But few aid agencies were to be seen along the road. They complain that Zairean rebels have admitted just nine into Goma. But even those were not to hand.

The UN said most of the refugees looked relatively healthy. The UN estimates the death toll at between 3,000 and 8,000 since the refugees began fleeing their camps three weeks ago when rebel attacks began.

No one is certain how many refugees are on the move and how many are unaccounted for. The UN estimates there are 700,000 Rwandans in the camps around Goma. Some refugees said that although the grip of the Interahamwe was broken, the extremists were still able to herd tens of thousands of Rwandans with them when the militias fled Mugunga camp.

The protracted negotiations and delays over the intervention force have reinforced suspicions that the US and Britain are buying time for the Zairean rebels and their Rwandan sponsors to deal a fatal blow to the Interahamwe.

There is also evidence that Western governments had plenty of warning about the disaster and may have encouraged the Rwandan Tutsis to attack the Hutu camps.

● Documentation detailing arms shipments from an Isle of Man-based company, Mil-Tec Corporation, has been found near a former refugee camp in Zaire. Mil-Tec made seven shipments to Goma in Zaire between April 17 and July 13, 1994.

Le Monde, page 14
Washington Post, page 15

Senior CIA man 'spied for Russia'

Martin Walker in Washington

A SENIOR member of the CIA appeared before a court in Virginia this week charged with selling secrets to Russia. Harold Nicholson, aged 46, of Burke, Virginia, who worked in the CIA's training division, betrayed his country not for ideological reasons, but for greed, said US Attorney Helen Fahey. "He had access to a great deal of very damaging information," she said.

The FBI said it had started to investigate Mr Nicholson, recently transferred to anti-terrorist activities, when he had difficulties taking a routine lie detector test. He is thought to have netted at least $120,000.

Surveillance officers said he was observed photocopying classified documents on Tuesday last week. Mr Nicholson, a divorced father of three, was arrested four days later at Dulles airport as he was about to leave for Switzerland. Ms Fahey suggested he was going to meet his Russian handlers there.

An FBI affidavit said Mr Nicholson may have given the Russians the identity and biography of a new CIA agent in Moscow trained by him. There are fears that he may have named all new agents trained during the past two years.

Mr Nicholson joined the CIA in 1980 and became a specialist in training agents for Russia and eastern Europe, putting him in a position to expose CIA networks throughout the region. The US attorney's statement suggested his spying had been going on for at least two years.

His arrest explodes claims made by the CIA that with the arrest and conviction of Aldrich Ames, former head of its counter-espionage office in Washington, the CIA had unearthed the mole who had betrayed American intelligence networks in the closing stages in the cold war.

Now serving a life sentence after accepting more than $2.5 million from his Soviet paymasters, Ames is blamed by the CIA for the exposure and subsequent deaths of up to 10 agents. There is no suggestion Mr Nicholson worked with Ames.

Mr Nicholson, who faces a life sentence if guilty of conspiracy to commit espionage, stood quietly during a brief appearance in a federal court in Alexandria.

The FBI said Mr Nicholson made a series of suspicious bank deposits following foreign trips. He first had direct contact with Soviet officials while serving in Manila from 1982-85, according to the FBI. He later served in Bangkok and Tokyo.

Mr Nicholson was chief of station for the CIA in Bucharest from 1990-92, then spent two years as deputy chief of station in Kuala Lumpur. From 1994 to July 1996, he taught new agents at the CIA's Virginia training site.

Romanians break free from their past

Nick Thorpe in Bucharest

TENS of thousands of young people streamed into the centre of Bucharest early on Monday to celebrate the victory of opposition candidate Emil Constantinescu in Romania's presidential elections. Chanting "Emil", "Victory" and anti-communist slogans, University Square became a sea of emotion.

Ion Iliescu, who has governed Romania for the past seven years, conceded defeat after an exit poll showed the former communist apparatchik had been decisively beaten.

The result means Romania has finally completed the revolution that began seven years ago with the bloody overthrow of the communist dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu.

Mr Iliescu and a group of other party officials took power in the confusion following Ceausescu's execution in December 1989. Since then the ruling socialist party, PDSR, has kept the country's centralised economy and state security apparatus largely unreformed.

"This means change, a major change for Romania," said Camelia, a student. Asked what she wanted from the new president, she replied simply "justice".

Mr Iliescu's opponents accuse him of sweeping the crimes of the communist years — and of those who killed more than 1,000 people during the revolution — under a carpet of pro-Western slogans.

In towns across the country flag-waving crowds flocked to squares where martyrs of the revolution had fallen, and car horns trumpeted deep into the night.

With 80 per cent of the votes counted by late Monday, the Central Electoral Bureau put Mr Constantinescu comfortably ahead with 55 per cent to Mr Iliescu's 45 per cent.

Mr Constantinescu, a 56-year-old professor of geology at the University of Bucharest, was helped to victory by a remarkable swing in his favour in rural regions, heavily collectivised under communism, and among Orthodox Christians in the conservative eastern provinces.

During the final televised debate with Mr Iliescu last week, Mr Constantinescu, who presented himself as "a simple, church-going Christian", recited a prayer instead of summing up his appeal.

Such gestures have helped establish him as a man of the people, in contrast to the wooden, dull language of former communist apparatchiks like Mr Iliescu.

Tap on the line, page 5

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Food issue that sticks in New Right's throat

JOHN HOOPER hits the nail on the head when he writes that Western governments fear legal action if they agree that their citizens enjoy a right to food itself (Right to food sticks in the West's throat, November 10). He is also right to review the World Food Summit in light of massive starvation and malnutrition in the Third World. Yet it is also essential to note that hunger in the First World has been growing at an alarming rate in recent years in countries which are allegedly food secure.

In Australia and New Zealand charitable food banks are fast becoming an established extension of the public welfare system; in Canada, which tops the UN Human Development Index, 2.5 million Canadians a year are also having to resort to handouts and food banks; in the US research shows that 28 million Americans are hungry, and in the UK a recent report noted that 1.5 million families were unable to feed themselves an 1876 workhouse diet based on current Income Support allowances.

Public begging is now a fact of life in all these societies. These are wealthy, food-secure countries with established welfare states. More to the point, each of these countries has in the past made international commitments through such instruments as the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which commit ratifying governments to ensure their citizens have the right to adequate food, clothing and shelter. What has gone wrong?

Clearly the right to food is the antithesis of New Right economic and social policy. For states to act on their international obligations and make the right to food justiciable would turn market ideology and privatised welfare reform upside down. It would require the governments of all these countries to commit themselves to full employment, adequate incomes and welfare benefits, and to drawing up well co-ordinated national food policy plans. If hunger is to be eliminated in the Third World, the First World needs to solve its own problem.
Graham Riches,
Professor of Social Work Programme, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, Canada

Delivering aid to those in need

ALEX DE WAAL (Sorry St Bob, but it's time we banned aid, October 27) must strike a very resonant note for any who have met the many doubtless well-intentioned but ultimately futile aid organisations in Central Africa. Several years ago in the main streets of Kampala, Uganda, one could see many four-wheel-drive vehicles bearing the logos of organisations quite unknown in the world at large. Meanwhile the hard work of relief went on as best it could, provided by underfunded groups such as the Salvation Army, which were lucky if they could afford a second-hand car.

In Tororo, where I was working in the hospital for the Canadian International Development Agency, we entertained a succession of bewildered workers unsure while spending the funds subscribed by well-wishers and even the governments of more affluent countries. A fraction of these sums, applied appropriately, could have been put to use in the care of children orphaned by the ravages of Aids, tuberculosis and internecine warfare.

A commissioner of the sort that De Waal envisages to direct and especially to monitor aid is an essential first step in exposing the present fiasco of aid delivery as well as making certain that most of the money spent for relief gets to the people it is meant for.
(Dr) K M Leighton,
Smithers, British Columbia, Canada

AS A medical doctor and aid worker who has experienced more than 10 wars around the world, I want as much as anyone to see relief brought to the 700,000 refugees in Goma, Zaire. Hesitation will cost thousands more lives.

But the international community faces a dilemma. A quick fix that freezes the situation and recreates the refugee camps will just cause another conflict and crisis in a few months' or a year's time.

Any international intervention must have two objectives: the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and the safe return of these refugees to Rwanda. This will require courage from the politicians and careful operational planning. But if the painful facts are not faced, and the camps are simply recreated, many more people will die in the long run.
(Dr) John Howarth,
Medical Director, Merlin (Medical Emergency Relief International), London

World Service to the fore

THE letter from John Durst in Italy (September 15) concerning John Birt's vision of the future of the BBC (Gateway to the BBC's future, September 1) must be one of many written in the same vein. Certainly from here in Kathmandu, where the likelihood of most households even having access to running water by 2006, never mind a telephone line, seems infinitesimal, Birt's vision appears not so much far fetched as utterly incomprehensible. Birt's views seem to typify a certain type of limited, insular, even parochial viewpoint prevalent in much of Britain today.

It is because the BBC World Service News Section understands the difference between life in say, Nepal and life in London that it's so highly valued by listeners and viewers throughout the world, and it is because Birt doesn't that he was surprised by the furore created by his plans to dismantle the World Service news service.
Beatrice Shrestha,
Kathmandu, Nepal

Ban that led to Bhutto's fall

WHY DOES the Guardian Weekly ignore the role of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in the fall of the Bhutto government.

Until August Pakistan's position was that it would sign the CTBT only if India did so too. It seems that this "tough" stance was adopted in order to be able to claim some kudos for getting India to fall into line. When it turned out that India was not going to sign, the Pakistanis suddenly decided that they would, after all, support the treaty. Given that in Pakistan, as in Britain, the thinking or lack of it underlying nuclear weapons strategy is not aired publicly, this sudden unexplained climbdown caused an uproar among the Islamist opposition. The Bhutto government, it seemed, was not only corrupt but also treacherous and incompetent.

The official statement said that "Pakistan has communicated to the Conference on Disarmament its reservations on the CTBT draft, but in order to advance the process of denuclearisation . . . is prepared to accept the text of the Treaty . . . while making it clear that in the event of a nuclear explosion by a third state [ie, India] Pakistan would have sufficient grounds to withdraw from the Treaty and any obligation linked to it."

This explanation did little to assuage the critics, and we see the result now in the overthrow of Benazir Bhutto and the reversion to the previous policy of refusal to sign the CTBT unless India also signs.
Wayne Hall,
Athens, Greece

How Shell can go well

YOUR article (Shell bows to pressure, November 17) may have given the impression that statements by Shell would be sufficient to rectify its failure to demonstrate that it is serious about human rights in Nigeria. Not so. In our joint statement with Pax Christi on November 7, we also called upon Shell to:

- Acknowledge publicly that the Ogoni 19 continue to face the prospect of a grossly unfair trial and to call for the abolition of the special tribunal due to try them;
- Join in the public condemnation of the life-threatening prison conditions in which they are being held;
- Ensure that no weapons are purchased or funded by Shell for the Nigerian police where they may be used to commit human rights abuses;
- Revise its "rules of engagement" for police seconded to work on Shell property, which currently fall far short of international standards;
- Agree procedures with credible representatives of the Niger Delta communities, for resolving disputes.

Jon Lunn,
Researcher, Amnesty International, London

Weasel words in Westminster

ONCE again we are faced with the ridiculous sight of politicians in a hole turning to linguistic sophistry as a way out (Minister accused of lying to MPs, November 17). We've had Alan Clark — who was "economical with the *actualité*". Then Michael Howard, with his "operational matter". Now we have David Willetts, who would have us believe that "he wants advice" really means "he is in want of advice".

This imaginative use of language could only operate within Westminster. We need a political system which operates by rules which we can all understand and have access to. Perhaps then we will get politicians who speak in plain English.
Andrew Puddephatt,
Director, Charter 88, London

Briefly

THE Government's reaction to the European Court of Justice's ruling (UK defies Europe on 48-hour week, November 17) is born out of arrogance and a cynical, "I'm all right, Jack" approach to Britain's working people. Arrogance, because it is saying to the rest of Europe: "We know best and if you don't agree with us we don't care, we'll do our own thing." Cynical, because it and some of its cronies in business have never knowingly gone short of a decent paid holiday every year.

Why doesn't it go the whole hog and implement the slave-like conditions of the Far East? That would make us even more competitive.
Richard Dyer-Smith,
New Milton, Hampshire

NOBODY forced Britain to join the European Community. It was the choice of a Conservative government, endorsed by a referendum in 1975.

When we join a club, we are bound to observe its rules. If we don't like the rules, but no other member shares our point of view if we try to change them, either we accept them, or we resign. Smashing the clubhouse windows shouldn't be an option.
William Gill,
London

MICHAEL HOWARD'S logic is peculiar. In his Crime (Sentences) Bill (Crime bill sets fail numbers soaring, November 3) he promises to build 12 new "super prisons" as part of the package. So more people will spend more time in prison. But weren't the measures supposed to reduce crime and thus the number of convicts? Or is Mr Howard just showing a bit of pre-election muscle?
Steven Zade,
Paris, France

AS A casually dressed patent examiner (and previously a casually dressed teacher), I have always failed to see the link between wearing a suit and being "professional" (The Week in Britain, November 10).

You will find that most of the finest swindlers and most incompetent managers in the City have plied their trade while immaculately or, at the very least, smartly dressed. The above equation was probably partly responsible for the fact that they got away with it for so long.
Alan Benfield,
Den Haag, Netherlands

IT IS not a comment on our age that Britain can construct a huge new building to celebrate the millennium (November 10) with nothing to go inside it.
Graham Carey,
Bingley, West Yorkshire

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The Week

RUSSIA's space programme suffered a major setback when disaster struck the star of its space exploration plan, a $64 million orbiter to probe Mars, minutes after its launch from Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.
Washington Post, page 15

A SUSPECTED bomb explosion in a building housing Russian servicemen and their families in the republic of Dagestan killed 32 people.

TEXACO, the oil company, said in New York that it had agreed to pay $176 million to settle a racial discrimination lawsuit filed against it by about 1,400 black employees in 1994.

BELARUS'S president Alexander Lukashenko, locked in a fierce battle for power with parliament, said that he had accepted the resignation of his prime minister, Mikhail Chigir, who opposes the president's bid to boost his powers in a referendum that ends on Sunday.

ALGER HISS, the former US diplomat and alleged Soviet mole whose exposure launched the McCarthyite anti-communist witchhunts in the US after the second world war, has died at the age of 92, protesting his innocence to the end.
Washington Post, page 16/17

BOUTROS Boutros-Ghali, the secretary-general of the United Nations, refused to pull out of the running for a second term, despite the determination of the US to veto his candidacy.

A UNITED Nations survey has found that the world's population is growing more slowly in most places than expected a few years ago. It also found that the number of people being added to the world each year has begun to fall sooner than anticipated.

FIVE people were injured, two seriously, after a fire broke out on a freight train in the Channel tunnel.

PAKISTAN's civilian police chief was charged with the murder of the brother of the former prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, whose death helped precipitate the fall of her government.

ANATOLY CHUBAIS, chief of Russia's presidential administration, was embroiled in a scandal after the leak of a conversation in which he allegedly conspired to cover up millions of dollars of illegal funding for Boris Yeltsin's re-election campaign.

THE Pentagon has chosen teams led by Boeing and Lockheed Martin to compete to build 3,000 hi-tech fighter jets for the US armed services at a cost of $200 billion.

Human error cited for air disaster

Suzanne Goldenberg in New Delhi

INDIA'S government launched a full-scale judicial inquiry last week after a Saudi jumbo jet and a Kazakh cargo plane were destroyed in a mid-air collision, 80km south-west of New Delhi, killing all 349 passengers and crew aboard the two planes.

It was the worst mid-air crash in aviation history, and the third worst air disaster. As Saudi crash experts made their way to India, investigators were focusing on possible communication problems between the Kazakh pilot and Delhi air traffic control, or equipment failure.

"It is 100 per cent pilot error," said S S Panesar, director of flight safety at Indian Airlines. "We pilots do make mistakes sometimes."

However, Sergei Kamenev, a Russian diplomat aiding the investigation, defended the pilot's record: "The head of the crew, Mr Cherbrenpanov, is a pilot of the first class. He made approximately 14 trips to India, we discovered from the log book."

The real cause of the disaster will not be known until the judicial inquiry completes its task next week.

The collision between the Saudi Boeing 747, carrying 312 people, and the Kazakh Ilyushin-76 charter flight with 37 aboard, occurred over sparsely populated farmlands in the northern state of Haryana. The Saudi airliner had left New Delhi's Indira Gandhi international airport bound for Dhahran and Jeddah only seven minutes earlier, when it crashed into the other plane arriving from Chimkent in Kazakhstan.

H S Khola, the director of civil aviation, said air controllers had ordered the Saudi plane to climb to 14,000ft, and the Kazakh aircraft to descend to 15,000ft, when disaster struck. "At 18.33 the [Saudi] aircraft was airborne and about 18.40 the contact was lost, about seven minutes after take-off," he said.

The secretary-general of the Indian air traffic controllers' guild said the Kazakh aircraft could have been flying at a height lower than 15,000ft.

"Russian aircraft normally have cockpit equipment marked in the metric system, and there could be a possibility of wrong data setting and thus wrong height level being maintained," he said.

Both planes were under New Delhi's air traffic control and had been given information about each other's movements.

The crash, which left scattered flaming debris for 10km, was seen by several people, including the pilots of a United States air force plane carrying supplies to the US embassy in New Delhi. "In the distance off our right-hand side, two fireballs seemed to appear . . . diverging from each other," one pilot said.

"There are no survivors," a police official said. "We thought we had three or four, but they died on the way to the hospital in Charkhi Dadri."

On Thursday, the funerals of 91 of the victims were held, presided over by Muslim, Hindu and Christian clergy, in Charkhi Dadri, the closest town to the disaster.

Most of the passengers on the Saudi plane were Indian nationals returning to jobs in the Gulf or going there to seek work.

Blip from disaster, page 23

Ex-army man wins Thai poll

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Bangkok

AN ARMY boss turned power-hungry civilian politician looks set to be Thailand's next prime minister after an election last Sunday that cost seven lives.

One analyst described the poll as "the messiest, the worst in terms of electoral violations and the most violent".

Chavalit Yongchaiyudh's New Aspiration Party won a narrow victory over the Democrat Party, led by a mild-mannered if tenacious former lawyer, Chuan Leekpai. The NAP won 125 seats to the DP's 123.

Even before the final results came in, Mr Chavalit could be seen on television hob-nobbing at home with leaders of four other political parties whose backing would give him a clear majority in parliament. They later drove together to the interior ministry to lodge a quick claim to form the new government.

The result is a personal triumph for Mr Chavalit, aged 64, who shunned the coup route to power so often adopted by his military predecessors. He has more than doubled his party's strength in parliament.

But his victory will add to gloomy forebodings about the future of this Asian tiger. After a decade of economic growth unaffected by the wheeling and dealing of self-serving politicians and generals, Thais have recently woken up to the realisation that they need stability, more transparent management, and far-reaching reform to remain competitive.



Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, leader of Thailand's New Aspiration Party, after election results gave him victory PHOTOGRAPH: SAKCHAI LALIT

A surge on the stock market last week helped by polls predicting a Democrat victory indicated the election result the business community desired. Mr Chuan enjoys a reputation for integrity almost unique among political leaders, and the support of a highly-regarded team of economic managers.

The circumstances surrounding Mr Chavalit's success will only reinforce business community unease and weaken his credibility, although the level of campaign violence was not unusual. A roaring trade in bullet-proof vests for candidates and constituency workers pointed to a lurking sense of menace.

Vote-buying, however, seems to have soared to new heights. One bank estimated that candidates had channelled close to $780 million into buying votes. The head of an independent poll monitor lamented that his staff had found people carrying cases stuffed with cash but police were unable to arrest them for lack of evidence.

Deputy PM faces child sex claims

Stephen Bates in Brussels

THE Belgian government was hit by a new crisis on Monday as Elio di Rupo, the deputy prime minister and economics minister, fought off allegations that he had been sexually involved with minors. The claims came in the wake of the country's paedophile scandal.

Mr di Rupo, who is openly homosexual, issued angry statements demanding to be allowed to clear his name after the public prosecutor's office in Brussels told parliament he was under investigation and that it was seeking to have him charged.

The government has come under fierce public criticism for its handling of allegations of widespread child abduction following the uncovering of a paedophile gang led by the builder Marc Dutroux in the southern city of Charleroi in August. The bodies of four young girls were found buried in the gardens of properties owned by Dutroux.

The incompetence of investigations and ministers' initial reluctance to get involved led to claims that Mr Dutroux had been shielded by those in authority, and that senior politicians must have been involved in a cover-up.

There were new allegations this week, and the prime minister, Jean-Luc Dehaene, and the agriculture minister, Karel Pinxten, issued statements denying media charges of influence-peddling. A regional government minister, Jean-Pierre Grafe, also denied having sex with minors.

Mr di Rupo claimed he was the victim of "most foolish and insulting information". In a statement he claimed: "I am the victim of a mix-up and confusion between events in my private life which do nobody any harm, and disgusting, outrageous acts which people want to attribute to me."

He added: "I wish to be heard so I can clear my name . . . I have never had anything at all to do with paedophilia. No action in my private life has ever harmed anybody."

Now that the prosecutor's office has formally requested that the minister should be charged, a debate on whether to lift his immunity from prosecution is certain to follow.

Castro hopes for a holy alliance

John Hooper in Rome

FIDEL CASTRO met Pope John Paul II on Tuesday in an historic encounter, and invited him to Cuba next year. The Cuban president had said earlier he hoped the meeting could lead to a lifting of the United States embargo on the island. Now that the US election was over, he said, he hoped that President Clinton would be able to do something.

He told a news conference at the end of the World Food Summit in Rome that the Pope could make a "very important contribution" towards ending the blockade. But the two men remain at opposite ends of the ideological spectrum and the Polish Pope will find the former guerrilla as unrepentant and revolutionary as ever.

President Castro shattered the summit's polite formality. In his speech to delegates he said that Western values were to blame for the world's hunger.

The summit, sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organisation, is aimed at halving over the next 20 years the number of undernourished people in the world from a present level of 140 million.

President Castro said: "The very modesty of these goals is shameful." Exploiting to the full a rare chance to shine on the international stage, the Cuban leader argued that the American embargo was also "attempted genocide against our country".

"I think this is a crime against humankind. We can't buy aspirin to stop a headache or medicines against cancer to save lives."

Italy blows hole in 'fortress Europe'

John Hooper in Rome

IN A MOVE that will dismay and exasperate its partners in the European Union, Italy's government has allowed to lapse the only legal instrument it possessed which permitted it to deport illegal immigrants.

For at least the next three months, Third World migrants will be able to get into the EU through Italy, confident that the most they risk is an unenforceable expulsion order.

The centre-left government's failure to act in time has outraged opposition politicians. In an apparent threat of vigilante action, the separatist Northern League said its volunteer "national guards" were ready to "guarantee order and security".

The deportation of illegal immigrants had been regulated by a decree which was issued last year at the Northern League's insistence. Its expiry is the most notable outcome so far of a recent court decision that threatens to make the country progressively more ungovernable.

Since the Italian parliament is unable to pass laws at a rate that meets public demand, successive governments have resorted to rolling over decrees. However, the constitution states that decrees ought to be issued only in cases of emergency and for a duration of six months. Last month, Italy's highest court ruled that this had to stop.

The most recent version of the decree on immigration lapsed at midnight on Friday last week. The government has yet to table a bill to replace it.

At the weekend, police stations around Italy received a circular from the chief of police, Fernando Masone, putting a stop to deportations for a minimum of three months. About 5,000 illegal immigrants served with expulsion orders under the provisions of the old decree will be able to stay in Italy as a result.

Maurizio Gasparri of the far-right National Alliance railed that he was expecting a "similar circular from the minister for families authorising paedophiles to rape children and one from the minister of justice allowing robbers to empty banks".

However, the situation also has drawbacks for Italy's immigrant community. Under pressure from the left, the decree was expanded to include provisions whereby illegal immigrants who could prove they had a job could regularise their situation.

As a result of its expiry, about 205,000 people who had provisionally been granted permission to remain in the country now find themselves in legal limbo.

Chief Masone's orders said "new instances" of illegal immigration would need to be dealt with by expulsion. But the only instrument left to the police merely allows them to serve an expulsion order on an immigrant, who is then free to leave the police station.

Many opt to go to another EU nation after their first brush with the police. This is what is likely to cause most anger in the EU — that Italy has allowed itself to become a gaping hole in "fortress Europe".

Its inability to maintain effective frontiers has already led to its being excluded from the arrangements allowing free movement across the Schengen group of EU countries cooperating on law-and-order issues.

A British Home Office spokeswoman said the UK would be able to send back any immigrants who attempted to move to Britain via Italy. "We have full and fair immigration laws and have retained all our frontier controls so there will be no real knock-on effect for this country."

Mr Clean quits, page 7



A Taliban militiaman checks his AK-47 rifle 25km north of Kabul last week where front line positions were mainly quiet PHOTO: SANTIAGO LYON

Nigeria snubs Commonwealth

Ian Black

NIGERIA'S military regime has again cocked a snook at the Commonwealth, refusing visas to some members of a top-level delegation investigating human rights abuses after the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa.

Britain's overseas aid minister, Lynda Chalker, joined the delegation of ministers and officials on Monday on a three-day fact-finding mission, which the Nigerians have done everything to sabotage.

But the Canadian secretary of state for Latin America and Africa, Christine Stewart, decided not to go after Nigeria refused visas to two security officers with her delegation.

The Canadian government has long been unhappy with what it calls the "appeasement" of Nigeria, and may have exploited the visa situation to distance itself from the mission of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group.

Diplomats said it was unclear whether Nigeria would allow ministers access to jailed opposition figures such as Moshood Abiola, the presumed winner of the annulled 1993 elections, and the former president, Olusegun Obasanjo.

Lady Chalker was making independent arrangements through the British High Commission to meet dissidents.

Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth at last year's Auckland summit after Saro-Wiwa and eight fellow minority Ogoni activists were hanged, despite numerous appeals for clemency. Limited sanctions imposed by the Commonwealth, the European Union and the United States have had little effect.

"The Nigerians are pretty firm that all they want to talk about is what they consider Nigeria's illegal and quite unjustified suspension from the Commonwealth," said one official. "They want the suspension lifted before any meaningful dialogue on democracy can be discussed."

The Commonwealth has been criticised for its toothless approach, but its need to make decisions by consensus has been paralysing in the face of sympathy for Nigeria from fellow African members.

Serb army denies deal over sacking

Branimir Grulovic

BOSNIAN Serb army officers denied on Tuesday that they had reached any agreement with their political leaders who have tried to purge the general staff.

The army headquarters under commander General Ratko Mladic issued a stern statement saying civilian-controlled media had distorted the results of a meeting on Monday with the Bosnian Serb president, Biljana Plavsic.

Serb media reported on Monday that Mrs Plavsic had reached an agreement with ousted generals on transferring authority to new commanders. But the army's account indicated that more than seven hours of talks in the northwest city of Banja Luka had failed to produce a deal between Mrs Plavsic and six top generals.

Gen Mladic's headquarters said only the commander himself should decide on changes to the military leadership. The statement proposed that Mrs Plavsic meet Gen Mladic on Wednesday to discuss the dispute.

Until this week, the army had tended to avoid using Gen Mladic's name since the Bosnian war ended last year. The general, who has kept a low profile over the past year, has been charged with genocide by a UN war crimes tribunal and must step down from any public post under terms of the US-brokered peace treaty.

A power struggle has erupted since Mrs Plavsic's decision last week to dismiss Gen Mladic and the rest of his general staff — a move the army has so far refused to recognise. Until the dispute was settled, the army said new commanders recently appointed by civilian authorities would not be allowed to visit any army base without "permission and knowledge" of Gen Mladic.

In the meantime, the army vowed to fight against any bid to enforce the dismissals. "Any attempt at a forced replacement of officers and troops should be vigorously resisted," it said.

Political analysts say the wartime leader, Radovan Karadzic, is almost certainly behind the move to dismiss the general staff. Mr Karadzic, who resigned as president under international pressure in July, tried and failed to sack Gen Mladic and other top generals last year. — *Reuter*

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates November 18	Sterling rates November 11
Australia	2.1098-2.1136	2.0903-2.0925
Austria	17.65-17.67	17.35-17.37
Belgium	51.68-51.79	50.80-50.91
Canada	2.2403-2.2425	2.1950-2.1967
Denmark	9.63-9.64	9.43-9.49
France	8.46-8.48	8.34-8.35
Germany	2.5088-2.5113	2.4667-2.4686
Hong Kong	12.92-12.93	12.72-12.73
Ireland	0.9979-0.9994	0.9965-0.9969
Italy	2,525-2,528	2,487-2,491
Japan	186.13-186.34	183.01-183.25
Netherlands	2.8130-2.8163	2.7668-2.7696
New Zealand	2.3562-2.3592	2.3198-2.3224
Norway	10.58-10.59	10.37-10.38
Portugal	253.67-253.90	249.95-250.18
Spain	211.21-211.39	207.79-207.92
Sweden	11.02-11.04	10.85-10.86
Switzerland	2.1195-2.1224	2.0742-2.0764
USA	1.6715-1.6710	1.6459-1.6466
ECU	1.3067-1.3081	1.2885-1.2904

FTSE100 Share index up 47.7 at 3962.1. FTSE 250 index down 18.1 at 4400.3. Gold down $1.50 at $379.55.

Women fight off Aids virus

SCIENTISTS confirmed last week that some people appear to have a natural ability to fight off the Aids virus and remain free of illness despite being repeatedly exposed to it, *writes Chris Mihill.*

There have been a number of studies of prostitutes in Africa and gay men in America where some people have consistently been found free of HIV although they were at high risk of contracting it.

Now doctors from Kenya and Canada are reporting on a group of prostitutes from Nairobi, where around one in 10 have remained free of the virus over a 10-year period.

The researchers have been following 424 women in a slum area of the city where the virus is rife and unsafe sex with infected men is frequent. Although the majority of the women have become infected, the researchers say in the British medical magazine Lancet that HIV cannot be detected in 43 of the women. The findings suggest that some people have a natural immunity to HIV.

The doctors, led by Francis Plummer of the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, say that all the women should have been infected by the end of the 10 years.

Israel pays out in jail sex case

Shyam Bhatia in Jerusalem

ISRAEL has been forced to pay compensation to a Palestinian youth who was sodomised by an Israeli soldier guarding him in a West Bank prison.

Lawyers for the Israeli government tried to reduce the $86,000 compensation because they said the youth, known as Ali, who was handcuffed and hooded before being sexually abused, had exaggerated his distress.

The soldier, Zion Ohion, is in his 30s and a father of six. A military court sentenced him to eight years imprisonment after finding him guilty of raping Ali and another 17-year-old in 1992. The second victim, "Jamal", is suing for $2.3 million.

Since the attack neither has been able to find a job; they complain of depression and sleeplessness and stay at home because of the stigma.

Israeli and Palestinian human rights activists say this is the first case of its kind to be brought before a court, and that it sheds light on the harsh conditions endured by 4,000 Palestinian prisoners.

"We have heard of these things before," said a spokeswoman for the Palestinian human rights organisation Al Haq. "In our society it is considered a shameful thing for a man to talk about sexual abuse and this issue will not be mentioned openly. We also see testimonies from Palestinian women who talk about sexual abuse and harassment from their Israeli jailers; I personally know of at least eight to 12 recent cases."

The Israeli army has always denied claims of rape. But ironically, it was the Shin Bet secret police, themselves notorious for torture, who persisted with the inquiries that led to Ohion's conviction.

Shin Bet is under fire for winning the Israeli Supreme Court's approval to use "moderate physical pressure" — a euphemism for torture — against a Palestinian accused of having information about an impending suicide attack.

The court last week overturned an interim court order forbidding the Shin Bet secret police from using physical force against the detainee.

A leading member of the United Nations anti-torture body criticised the court decision, saying it risked sanctioning torture. Peter Burns, a Canadian senior member of the UN human rights body's torture committee and its rapporteur for Israel, said: "It is particularly disappointing that such a civilised society as Israel should feel the need to resort to such measures even in the face of imminent danger."

The two rape victims were arrested four years ago for throwing stones at Israeli soldiers, and taken to a military prison in the West Bank city of Tulkarm. Ohion was on duty and repeatedly threatened to rape the Palestinians if they did not confess.

Ali told disbelieving military police: "This person handcuffed me behind my back and placed a bag over my head. Then he marched me to another room where he pulled down my trousers and forced me to crouch like a dog."

One week later Ohion assaulted Jamal.

The military judges who found him guilty said the youths "will be scarred for the rest of their lives and it is clear that great damage has been done to the reputation of the Israeli army".

Cannabis law reformer 'to boost output'

A TRIUMPHANT Dennis Peron, architect of the Californian cannabis reform law, plans to grow thousands of plants in warehouses to supply the sick and dying, *Christopher Reed reports from Los Angeles.*

He says that the referendum law decriminalising the drug for medicinal purposes, which was passed in the November 5 election by a 56-44 per cent majority, makes his Cannabis Buyers' Club in San Francisco a "primary care giver", protected from prosecution if it supplies cannabis directly to the sick.

But the city's district attorney, Terence Hallinan, is not convinced. "I need to know more, but I think that would be prosecuted," he said. "We see the primary care giver as a companion of someone with Aids who goes out in the street and scores an ounce for his friend to use."

The wording of the law is vague. Mr Peron claims that the definition of a care giver as the provider of "housing, health, or safety" to a patient needing cannabis entitles the club to grow what is now recognised in California as a medicinal herb.

He points to the club's record. For five years it sold cannabis at discount prices to 12,000 patients with the approval of city officials, provided the patients brought identification and a doctor's letter. "We gave primary care," he declares, "and patients can now assign us."

Yet even Mr Peron's chief ally, David Fratello of Californians for Compassionate Use, says the warehouse plan "lies outside the spirit of the law". The law allows a patient to cultivate small amounts for personal use, he says, "but the matter of large-scale supply and distribution has yet to be addressed".

Meanwhile the state's cannabis farmers are sending this year's crop to market at an asking price of $5,000 a pound. Their activities are still illegal and under federal law possession and use of any amount of cannabis remains a crime.

The state attorney-general, Dan Lungren, who closed Mr Peron's club last August and then arrested him, said: "It's a disaster. We have legal anarchy."

Nevertheless he has not gone to court to challenge the law, as his opponents expected. Mr Fratello believes that the state lacks sufficient legal grounds for a challenge. But he and others acknowledge that the state legislature should clarify the law.

The law lists cancer, anorexia, Aids, chronic pain, spasticity, glaucoma, arthritis, and migraine as candidates for cannabis treatment with a doctor's recommendation, and "any other illness for which marijuana provides relief". Critics say this is too vague and could lead to abuse.

Californian police officers are also confused about applying the law, which became effective as soon as it was passed. Different forces have received different orders, but nobody claiming medical need has been arrested since election day, and at least three cases have been dropped.

Securitate still has Romania tapped

Julian Borger in Bucharest

JOURNALISTS and opposition politicians in Bucharest have become accustomed to clicks on their telephone lines, assuming them to be the hallmark of the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI).

But nothing could be further from the truth, insists Captain Constantin Bucur. "When we're listening to your phone line, there is no way you can tell," he maintains proudly. Capt Bucur — an intelligence officer turned whistle-blower — claims Romania's secret police are just as busy as they were in the communist era, when they were called the Securitate.

To prove it, he has produced hours of tapes of recorded conversations between opposition politicians and their colleagues, friends and family.

Capt Bucur's department listened mostly to the nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM). The patriotic captain was so impressed by what he overheard that he defected to the PRM in May, with his tapes.

The SRI dismissed Capt Bucur, and has threatened to court-martial him for taking and publishing the recordings. The SRI's director, Virgil Magureanu, insists no surveillance is carried out without legal authority.

The parliamentary speaker, Adrian Nastase, also rejects the allegations. The PRM, he says, "have just found someone with radical feelings to make a noise for them".

A recent parliamentary inquiry found that the SRI conducted 900 authorised phone taps in 1995, 80 per cent of them on foreigners. Mr Nastase insists the SRI is under strict parliamentary scrutiny, but Capt Bucur claims most of the surveillance he carried out, including taps on opposition newspapers, was not formally authorised but ordered directly by Mr Magureanu.

The secret police was the central prop underpinning the dictatorial regime of Nicolae Ceausescu. But although Ceausescu has been dead for almost seven years, the spirit and methods of the Securitate seem to live on, locked in a paranoid embrace with former communists in the Party for Social Democracy (PDSR).

The SRI — unlike communist spy networks elsewhere in eastern Europe — has yet to undergo reform or scrutiny. Romanians still do not know whether the bloody events of December 1989 were a real revolution or a charade manipulated by a group of communist plotters. More than 1,000 civilians were shot by snipers during street protests, but none of the gunmen has ever been prosecuted.

However, with the PDSR losing parliamentary and presidential elections, the truth behind the Romanian "revolution" may now finally come to the surface.

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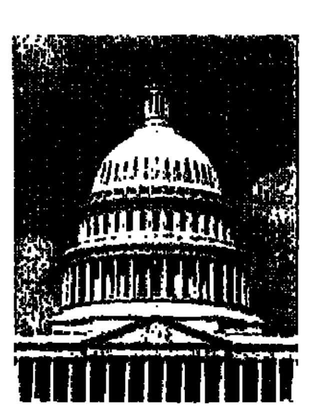


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Wily Trent Lott holds whip hand



The US this week

Martin Walker

PRESIDENT Clinton celebrated his re-election victory by leaving the battlefield for a triumphant tour of the Asia-Pacific region, and to consolidate the free-trade strategy that was the most important legacy of his first term.

That at least was the way the White House background briefings chose to put it, and it all sounded a great deal more high-minded than the confused and grumpy way in which the United States was shamed by France and cajoled by Canada into joining the worryingly ill-conceived multinational force to do something — although few would say what — about the humanitarian disaster in Zaire.

But by leaving the Washington battlefield, Clinton abandoned it to his new adversary, the wily Republican Senate leader, Trent Lott of Mississippi. As Republican leaders rallied to save Newt Gingrich's post as Speaker of the House from an internal revolt, it has become clear that Clinton's second term will be defined by how well he gets on with Senator Lott, aged 55, the fellow-Southerner and fellow-Baptist whom he successfully bamboozled last year. Lott was the Republican whip last year who thought that Dick Morris, the politically ambidextrous campaign strategist he shared with the president, would be the perfect back-channel for a secret deal to be negotiated on the budget.

"We don't really have to have a train-wreck, Mr President," Lott told Clinton in a discreet phone call last August, signalling that he saw no reason to deliver a draconian Republican budget that would force a presidential veto and close down the government, as the other Republicans were threatening. Clinton strung Lott along — and perhaps Morris too — with the tantalising prospect of a budget deal that Clinton finally rejected, preferring to define himself as the president who defended the elderly against the heartless Republicans.

It will take a lot to get Lott to trust Clinton again. He nurses a grudge which may already have sunk the president's plan to get Medicare and social security reform out of politics by setting up bipartisan national commissions to come up with solutions both parties can accept.

"The Democrats misrepresented us, lied and demagogued us up and down about Medicare," Lott said in a comment that may have killed any Clinton hope of a bipartisan spirit between Congress and the White House. That remark stood in sharp contrast to Lott's emollient words immediately after the election result was announced, when he said: "We want to put the bitterness of the campaign behind us as much as we can, and work together."

The two remarks betray what Lott's enemies (and there are many in the Republican party who think he brusquely shouldered them aside on his way to the top) see as an over-tricky flexibility. It was best summed up in the careful way he signalled that he was ready to compromise with the re-elected president, but on his terms.

"Bill Clinton said he was for less government and less taxes. He talked like a Republican. If he means that sincerely, we can work together on continuing to reduce the deficit and balance the federal budget. I think we can come to an agreement on some tax cuts that would be good for the economy and make the tax code fairer."

The president's latest comment — that he might accept a balanced budget amendment, so long as it permitted Keynesian deficit-budgeting in a recession — was a down-payment on Lott's goodwill. An overtly friendly fellow, Lott was a male cheerleader at his college and sings an excellent bass in the Republican party's barber-shop quartet. He learned his politics at Ole Miss, the University of Mississippi, where to be elected chief cheerleader was the way ahead in campus and state politics.

As leader of the Senate, Lott now outshines the Republican Speaker of the House because his Senate team won two extra seats while the House team lost nine, and because Gingrich is distracted by the continuing probes by the congressional ethics committee into the relations between his campaign finance and his private think-tank ventures.

Trent Lott was born and brought up as a Democrat, in a classic blue-collar household in Mississippi, where his alcoholic father was a pipe fitter and his mother a teacher. After graduating from the local Mississippi law school in 1967, he came to Washington to work on the staff of the veteran segregationist and Democratic congressman, William Colmer. When Colmer retired in 1972, Lott ran for his seat with Colmer's blessing, but as a Republican. He was one of the wave of Democratic defectors who shifted to the banner of President Nixon's Southern strategy, and later became one of Nixon's staunchest defenders on the House judiciary committee inquiry into the Watergate scandal.

Becoming a senator in 1988, Lott joined his friend, the then congressional whip Newt Gingrich, in opposing the 1990 budget compromise that forced President Bush to renege on his famous read-my-lips promise of no new taxes. But Lott carefully stayed close to Texas Senator Phil Gramm, who helped negotiate that deal. Lott then went against the wishes of his Senate leader Robert Dole to run for, and narrowly win, the election as Senate Republican whip in 1995. With Gramm's support, this guaranteed Lott the succession when Dole stepped down to run for the presidency.

In the past five months, he has proved a pragmatic Senate leader, ready to compromise with the Democrats to pass the minimum wage increase and welfare reform, insisting that the Republican Congress had to have some achievements to boast of when they faced the electors. The big question in Washington is whether he will continue that pragmatism or wreak revenge on Clinton.

Meanwhile, somewhere in Asia, Clinton is planning to bounce the European Union into his free trade agenda all over again. Because the Asian card worked so well last time he tried it, he cannot resist the temptation to play it again.

THREE years ago, when US and European trade negotiators were deadlocked on the last lap of the Uruguay round of the Gatt world trade pact, Clinton convened the first Pacific Rim summit in Seattle in November, 1993. Dubbed the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference (Apec), it was carefully designed to exclude the Europeans.

Given that Clinton was already furious with the British and French over Bosnia, and his secretary of state Warren Christopher was sniffing that US foreign policy had been "too Eurocentric for too long", the Europeans grew exceedingly nervous. If the Gatt round failed altogether, the US was clearly content to arrange its own trading strategy with the Pacific Rim, which include the fastest-growing economies on the planet. "We had no choice but to reach a settlement," commented one of the top European negotiators. "The Americans had an alternative and we didn't."

The high point of Clinton's tour, as he still basks in the glow from his re-election, will be the fourth Apec summit at the old UN Naval base of Subic Bay in the Philippines.

These events deserve a lot more attention than they usually receive in the European media. Clinton's first Apec summit agreed to explore whether the Pacific Rim countries could "achieve free and open trade and investment in the region". The second, at Bodor, Indonesia, agreed that they could, and formalised a plan for the industrialised Apec members progressively to achieve free trade among themselves by 2010, with the less industrialised countries following suit by 2020. The third, at Osaka last year, laid down the procedural steps to achieve this, with each country expected to produce an individual action plan, and then co-ordinate this with a comprehensive action plan agreed by them all.

This makes Apec sound a lot more smoothly organised than it is. Dreadful trade-rows between China and the US, and rather less serious ones with Japan, keep the political tensions high. Malaysia is characteristically grumpy. Indonesia worries its partners over human rights and East Timor, and is now so much raw meat for the American media after the fuss about dubious donations to the Clinton campaign.

But step back from the rows, and something of awesome potential is being built, whose implications range far beyond trade. This is one international forum where Taiwan and China sit together, where countries like Chile and Peru are now being steered into membership, and where Russia is still carefully excluded. The US, of course, is first among equals, locking itself into the heart of what will be one of the central institutions of the next century.

Moreover the Apec effect carries some rather important implications for the Asians. The Bush administration tried to persuade Japan to change the fundamental nature of its society, to break loose from the ministry of finance bureaucracy and open its markets, break the local distribution and retail monopolies, and deregulate Japan's financial markets.

Clinton dropped the messianic rhetoric, and has secured a strengthened US-Japanese security agreement. Last week, the Japanese prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, announced an ambitious package of financial deregulation, explicitly aimed at making the Tokyo markets "equivalent to those in New York and London by 2001".

FOR the Subic Bay conference this week, the Americans and the Japanese have cooked up a deal to keep up the momentum of the Apec process by demanding a new information technology agreement that will bring free trade within three years to a sector currently worth half a trillion dollars a year. As drafted, the ITA would be all-embracing, ranging from semiconductors to consumer electronics to hardware and software. The idea is to secure an Apec consensus, and then move directly to the World Trade Organisation's first ministerial meeting in Singapore, and bounce the Europeans into agreement, just as they did with the Uruguay round.

There are important voices hoping to push this even further, and get the WTO to follow the original Apec commitment to set firm targets to achieve global free trade for all developed nations by 2010, and for everybody by 2020. This is the ploy of Fred Bergsten, a genial former US Treasury official and basketball fan who runs the one of the world's least-known but most influential think tanks, the Institute for International Economics in Washington DC.

As chairman of the Eminent Persons Group, the body which fleshed out the vague ambitions of Apec and acted as the sherpa to the first crucial summits, Bergsten was the intellectual godfather of Apec from the beginning. As host to this week's summit, the Philippines asked Bergsten to resume his work, in the full knowledge of his missionary zeal to achieve global free trade as soon as he can.

"The combination of global free trade proposals and an informational technology agreement would have a dramatic impact on both Apec and the World Trade Organisation," Bergsten told a Washington gathering last week of US and Asian officials, businessmen and a selected handful of journalists.

"Their adoption would install Apec definitively as a permanent bulwark of regional co-operation and a decisive force for world prosperity and stability," he went on. "It would assert leadership of the global trading system."

The question for Europeans is whether they climb aboard this bandwagon or try to slow it. At the Naples Group of Seven summit in July 1994, the Europeans turned down Clinton's proposal for "Open Markets 2000". But there could be a deal in the offing. Without European support, there will be no great breakthrough at the WTO conference in Singapore. The Europeans want the Americans to drop the ridiculous Helms-Burton law, which exposes their businessmen to the tender mercies of the US courts if they trade with Cuba, and the other offensive US attempt to block foreign investment in Iran's oilfields. It could be time to bargain, but do not forget that any deal would need the co-operation of Senator Trent Lott, the new master of Congress.

Enraged Mr Clean quits Italian cabinet

John Hooper in Rome

ANTONIO DI PIETRO, the former anti-corruption prosecutor who became a national icon by setting off Italy's "quiet revolution", stormed out of government last week after learning he had again been put under investigation for corruption.

In a bitter letter to the prime minister, Romano Prodi, he said: "I have to be made to pay at all costs for my only real fault (of which, moreover, I am proud) — that of having wanted at all costs to do my duty to the end. At this point, I am saying *Basta!* [enough]"

Prof Prodi promised to ask his former public works minister to reconsider his decision. But in his letter, Mr Di Pietro "earnestly begged" him not to do so. And Mr Di Pietro's spokeswoman said the decision was "irrevocable".

Mr Di Pietro's departure has potentially far-reaching implications. It creates a new nightmare for the centre-left government, already struggling to get a vital austerity budget through parliament. It removes a furiously dynamic and controversial personality from the political stage.

But it also raises the strong possibility of Mr Di Pietro, Italy's most popular public figure, creating his own political movement. A populist by inclination, he now has many additional reasons for distrusting left and right.

Speculation that he might go, and then form a party of his own, had earlier been aired in connection with another political departure, that of Alessandra Mussolini. The granddaughter of Italy's wartime dictator let it be known that she had resigned from the hard-right National Alliance.

She has said she was upset at not having been given a sufficiently prominent role in the party's reorganisation. But according to some reports, her exit was also a prelude to linking up with Mr Di Pietro in a new populist movement. She praised Mr Di Pietro for his "decisive, consistent, rigorous move . . . Now he is free to clear up his position at a time of poisonous rumours".

It was confirmed last week that Mr Di Pietro had been formally placed under investigation by prosecutors in the northern town of Brescia. They had reportedly decided to look into claims by a corruption suspect that he once bought off the "Clean Hands" anti-corruption team of which he was the best-known member.

Mr Di Pietro said he had had enough "above all, of those who want to use me as a way of discrediting the Clean Hands inquiry on the one hand and the government and the institutions of state on the other".

Silvio Berlusconi, the opposition leader, is himself on trial for bribery. The man formerly in charge of his party machine is under investigation for plotting to end Mr Di Pietro's career as a prosecutor by means of earlier corruption accusations that were thrown out in court.

However, of late, the biggest problems the Clean Hands investigation has had to deal with have come from Mr Prodi's government and the main party backing it, the formerly communist Democratic Party.

Troubled times stretch faith in Kohl

The German chancellor is pushing hard for a single European currency. Can he deliver? **Ian Traynor** and **Martin Woollacott** report from Bonn



PETER ERMLICH spent last week banging a steel drum in a rainswept Bonn, fearful for his future, his job, and the livelihood of his mining community.

A hundred metres away, Helmut Kohl was pushing through more cuts in Germany's generous system of benefits and industrial subsidies. For the German chancellor, this is the road to European integration and the 21st century. For Mr Ermlich and the other miners staging a round-the-clock vigil outside Mr Kohl's office, it is the road to ruin.

"All these cuts are going to kill us," said Mr Ermlich, aged 36, a Dortmund miner who went down the pit as a teenager. "Coal not Kohl," the banners proclaimed in protest at government plans to slash mining subsidies. "Once the colliery dies, the town dies."

These are troubled times for all Germans. In his determination to achieve European political and monetary union, the chancellor has thrust a huge burden on the shoulders of his country. The word one hears more and more in Germany is *überfordert* (overstretched).

Many Germans worry that Mr Kohl has bitten off more than he can chew — unemployment expected to exceed 5 million next year; the belt-tightening needed to make the grade for the single currency; the continuing costs of German unification; a general election in two years' time; the risks posed to German prosperity and industrial prowess by globalisation; the move of the entire governmental apparatus from Bonn to Berlin. And all of this before the end of the century.

"Something has to give," said Thomas Kielinger, a commentator in Bonn. "The single currency project has severely overloaded the circuits. This country has overextended its capacity to cope with its problems."

In short, with Chancellor Kohl in his 15th year in power, the German state confronts the biggest changes since the upheavals of the late 1960s, and perhaps since the war.

Warnings of trouble ahead are more and more frequent. The latest was last week's report by Germany's council of economic advisers warning that the gap between Germany's economic performance and the Maastricht requirements was widening. The economists argued that public finances in Germany and elsewhere in Europe were in such a fix as perhaps to require a delay in the single currency launch. Mr Kohl, politicians, and business leaders brushed off the warnings — signalling that political resolve on the single currency matters more than economic formulas.

But Mr Kielinger said: "There is a continuous piecemeal deterioration of the financial situation . . . and the blood, sweat, and tears speech has yet to be made."

It would be foolish to conclude that Germany will fail in this extraordinary effort. The chancellor and the bulk of the political and industrial élite are extremely determined. Mr Kielinger is one of very few who question the whole process.

Mr Kohl has created a situation in which failure on monetary union would be seen as a greater disaster than whatever difficulties lie beyond 1999. "Germany is overloaded with problems," said Jochen Thies, a journalist and analyst, "but Germans see Kohl not as the man who created the problems but as the man who will ensure that they are properly dealt with."

The huge trust in Mr Kohl indicates the depth of German anxiety. The élite also feels the pressure of the rest of Europe's constant need for reassurance.

Beneath a surface confidence in Germany's capabilities and resources lies great uncertainty. The most important decision for decades has been taken without much debate, at a time when the ruling party is under the sway of a long-established leader and the main opposition party is in disarray. It almost seems as if the debate that ought to have preceded the decision is taking place afterwards — when it cannot affect the outcome.

Insecurity manifests itself in many ways. Small savers salt away money in Luxembourg or Switzerland, both to avoid the German taxman and for fear of the leap in the dark of 1999's single currency launch.

Business capital is also rushing out of the country in search of higher returns. There is a dearth of domestic and inward investment which the economic advisers named as the single biggest reason for the flagging economy.

Among the Bonn élite, even true believers in the European project confess they are having second thoughts about putting their money where their mouths are. Some political veterans argue that the challenges of the next few years are so monumental as to require a "grand coalition" of the two big parties — the ruling Christian Democrats and the opposition Social Democrats.

Germans are reluctant risk-takers and Mr Kohl's mission is an unsettling gamble. It is also a venture with almost magical qualities. The 1999 deadline has what the historian Karl Dietrich Bracher calls "psychological" resonance.

"The mantra is that everything has to happen before 2000. Why must everything happen in 1999? There are magical, psychological and irrational elements."

The 1999 deadline can be seen as a way for Germany to end in a positive way a century in which it caused disaster for itself and for Europe. It marks 50 years since the first steps to reintegrate post-war Germany into Europe and the international community. It also marks the switch from Bonn to Berlin.

The rest of Europe is inevitably caught up in this German millennium and dependent on how potent this German magic proves. Few Germans oppose it, not many express clear doubts, but the ambitiousness of what is being attempted occasionally produces an oblique admission that things could go wrong.

One Kohl aide, after talking at length of the firmness with which the chancellor and Germany are pursuing their objectives, eventually paused, shrugged, and said: "If it doesn't work out, at least we will have Berlin as the capital."

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The Week in Britain James Lewis

Al Fayeds force Howard's hand on citizenship issue

THE COURT of Appeal quashed a decision by the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, to refuse British citizenship to Mohamed Al Fayed, the owner of Harrods store, and his brother, Ali. Two of the three judges ruled that Mr Howard had acted unfairly in not telling the brothers the reasons for his refusal. The Master of the Rolls, Lord Woolf, said they should have been given a chance to answer whatever evidence there was against them. The Home Secretary, who disagrees, is to appeal.

Mr Al Fayed, born in Egypt, has lived in Britain for more than 30 years. Besides donating £250,000 to the Conservatives before the 1987 election, he has supported London hospitals with millions of pounds, sponsored the Royal Windsor Horse Show, bought a castle and 30,000 acres in Scotland, and an estate in Surrey. But, for all the gentrification, he still felt a "foreigner", unaccepted by the British establishment. Hence the failed application for passports.

Harrods was part of the House of Fraser group which Mr Al Fayed acquired only after a bitter struggle with a rival bidder, Tiny Rowland of Lonrho. A government inquiry into the takeover battle later reported that the Fayed brothers had "dishonestly misrepresented their origins, their wealth and their business interests". Mr Al Fayed was furious.

"That report was a scandal," he said. "They could not accept that an Egyptian could own Harrods, so they threw mud at me and my family." For two years he has maintained a stream of allegations about MPs accepting cash for parliamentary questions, which has wounded the Government and caused two ministers to resign.

After his successful appeal, Mr Al Fayed wrapped himself in the Union Jack and gave out Christmas puddings outside his prestige store, saying he would not rest until he found out what motivated Mr Howard. He may never do so. The Home Secretary's appeal is likely to be on the grounds that the law does not require him to give reasons for refusing citizenship.

CONSERVATIVES, more commonly the targets of sleaze allegations, seized the opportunity to point accusing fingers at their political rivals over "secret" funding and dubious methods of fund-raising.

Labour, which recently pledged to name all those donating more than £5,000, was found to have been receiving contributions adding up to around £500,000 a year to maintain Tony Blair's private office. Accused of hypocrisy by the Tory chairman, Brian Mawhinney, Labour said that the money went into a "blind" fund approved by the parliamentary watchdog, Sir Gordon Downey. The names of the donors were specifically withheld from Mr Blair so that they could not be seen as trying to buy political influence.

The Liberal Democrats also came under fire when they were found to have organised a lunch, during their annual conference in September, at which businessmen were invited to pay £139 each for the opportunity to meet local council leaders. The invitation drew attention to the large amounts of cash spent by councils each year. A Lib Dem spokesman said that council contracts were drawn up by tender, and it was preposterous to suppose that a deal could be fixed up over lunch.

The Prime Minister called for an investigation, preferably by Lord Nolan's committee on standards of conduct in public life. Labour and the Lib Dems agreed, but Lord Nolan is not in the business of investigating specific allegations.

A SCHOOL made an out-of-court payment of £30,000 in compensation to a 20-year-old man for alleged bullying at school which, he claimed, had traumatised him and affected his career.

Sebastian Sharp's writ claimed the school had failed to take reasonable care for his health and safety. As a result, he had been regularly kicked, punched and insulted from the age of 11, when he started at the school, until he ran away at 15. Bullying had seriously affected his personality, making him anxious, depressed and suicidal.

The London borough of Richmond upon Thames, responsible for the school, said that if the case had gone to the High Court it would have contested Mr Sharp's claims. The decision to settle was taken by the council's insurers. The payout could lead to a flood of claims against other schools.

CASINOS are to be allowed to open in eight more cities and towns as a result of relaxation of controls of the gaming industry. One will be in London's Docklands, and the other venues — Bath, Eastbourne, Exeter, Harrogate, Norwich, Telford and York — are mostly conference centres. A new charity is also being set up to help addicted gamblers.

THE televised babblings of the Duchess of York — described by one US critic as "the worst import from Britain since BSE" — fell pretty flat at home, too. In an interview with Ruby Wax to plug her new book, the duchess suggested that a slimming drug, taken when she was 16, might be partly to blame for her disastrous life as a member of the royal family. There was much contrition and recrimination, but it appears that there is simply not much more to reveal about the royals.




Karamjit Sing Chahal with family members after his release from Bedford prison PHOTOGRAPH: RON FAIRLEY

European Court orders Sikh freed

Clare Dyer and Owen Bowcott

A SIKH leader who spent more than six years in prison battling against deportation is celebrating his release after the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg held last week that he would be subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment if the British government deported him to India.

Karamjit Singh Chahal, whose case was rejected by the British courts after the Government claimed he was a threat to national security, was set free within hours of the ruling.

The judgment will force the Government to change the way it deals with asylum seekers fearing torture if returned to their home country, and those alleged to be national security risks. Ministers will no longer be able to dismiss fears of torture without evidence, or prevent courts looking behind claims of risk to national security in such cases.

In a strongly worded judgment, the court held that the "fundamental importance of torture and the irreversible nature of the harm that might occur" requires independent scrutiny of asylum seekers' claims. The protection of the convention was absolute in this area, so the scrutiny must be carried out regardless of what the asylum seeker was alleged to have done or any threat to national security, the judges held.

Mr Chahal was convicted of assault and causing an affray arising out of a fracas at a Sikh temple, but his conviction was overturned. The Home Office then accused him of "violent involvement in Sikh terrorism" and decided to deport him "for reasons of national security and . . . the international fight against terrorism".

None of the courts which considered his pleas to remain in Britain had seen details of the evidence that he was a national security risk. An advisory panel headed by a Court of Appeal judge had considered the evidence, but this did not offer sufficient procedural safeguards to qualify as a court. The European Convention states that anyone deprived of liberty must be able to challenge this speedily before a court.

Officials are reading the judgment to decide whether it will force them to release another Sikh, Raghbir Singh, detained without charge in Winson Green prison for more than a year on similar grounds.

The Chahal case highlights concern in Whitehall at the problem of how to deal with asylum seekers. The Foreign Office has pressed the United Nations to change the terms of the 1951 convention on refugees so those allegedly "aiding and abetting terrorism" could be excluded before they can claim political asylum.

● Ministers are to drop their attempt to withdraw state help from 15,000 asylum seekers who would otherwise face destitution on the streets of London, if they lose an appeal in the new year against a High Court ruling.

Church divided over sin and sexuality

Madeleine Bunting

SUNDAY'S celebration to mark the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement's 20th anniversary brought to a head the most divisive issue in the Church of England since the ordination of women.

In Southwark Cathedral, 2,000 members and supporters of the movement gathered to pray for recognition and acceptance in the Church, which bans practising homosexuals from being ordained and outlaws blessings for same-sex relationships.

At the same time, evangelicals in about 50 Anglican churches all over the country were praying to the same God that gays and lesbians repent of their "evil acts" and that He forgive the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, for the Church's failure to "drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine".

The Southwark event concentrated the campaigning efforts of both the LGCM and Reform, the conservative evangelical group.

The LGCM, under the assiduous guidance for the last 20 years of its founder Richard Kirker, is nothing if not astute at strategy. The use of a cathedral for the service incensed evangelical opponents.

Southwark has mobilised Reform into a frenzy of activity, and the group has called for evangelicals to challenge bishops to declare their position and boycott those who refuse to endorse their opposition to homosexuality.

Slurs by members of Reform have become increasingly vicious, including likening gays to Nazis or advocates of apartheid; they have referred in press releases to the case of a Roman Catholic priest sentenced last week to six years for abusing boys and amassing the biggest collection of Internet pornography, with the clear implication that gays are paedophiles.

The LGCM's dogged persistence and confidence infuriate Reform. LGCM supporters believe history is on their side. They draw parallels with the long struggle for women's ordination and take courage from the steady progress they have made in recent years for what they believe is ultimately a question of justice and honesty.

The one thing Reform and the LGCM have in common is their capacity to stir up a fuss out of all proportion to their small memberships. Reform has 500 clergy and 800 lay members, while the LGCM has 1,200 members, of whom 400 are clergy.

But beyond Reform's fanatics lies a hinterland of support — as an Evangelical Alliance survey published last week pointed out. A staggering 96 per cent believed same-sex relationships were always wrong.

This is the bishops' worst nightmare — evangelicals and liberals flinging Bible verses at each other, and fighting for the allegiance of the vast bulk of church-going Anglicans who have little interest in, and even less knowledge of, homosexuality.

In the 1990s the comfortable double standards by which everyone knew there were gay clergy, and no bishop would dream of doing anything about it, have collapsed. An increasingly self-confident gay lobby is no longer satisfied with this furtive, grudging tolerance.

In the future lies the worldwide Anglican Communion's Lambeth Conference of 1998 where American, Canadian, New Zealand and Australian bishops will be pressing Dr Carey to explain why England is trailing behind them.

In Brief

A SHARP improvement in the performance of England's 11-year-olds at national tests in reading, writing and arithmetic was hailed as evidence of solid progress. But the results showed more than 40 per cent of pupils graduating from primary schools this summer failed to reach the standard expected.

BRITISH Airways faces a bill of £3 million after losing a French appeal court case involving compensation for hostages seized from a BA plane which landed at Kuwait on August 2, 1990 — four hours after Iraq invaded the Gulf state.

WRITS claiming compensation from the Ministry of Defence are to be issued by lawyers for more than 1,000 veterans suffering from illnesses they believe are linked to the their Gulf war service.

THE gap between Britain's rich and poor has stopped widening for the first time in 20 years, according to official figures which show that 400,000 fewer people are living below half the average income level.

THOUSANDS of burnt out teachers will be refused early retirement because of a Treasury move to save £100 million on pensions to help the Government meet its public spending target ahead of the Budget.

FATHER Adrian McLeish, a Roman Catholic priest who used the Internet to tell paedophiles around the world how he had abused boys, has been jailed for six years.

GEORGE BROWNING, an ear surgeon diagnosed as HIV positive, will be allowed to operatine again using long-range techniques, although patients will be asked if they object.

VICE-CHANCELLORS said the Government must lift its artificial ceiling on numbers of students at university or risk the creation of an unstable society with a disenfranchised underclass unable to break through into high-skill jobs.

CAMELOT, the National Lottery operator, sought to defuse accusations about excessive profits by establishing a new charitable foundation to donate £5 million to charities in its first year, making it one of the largest corporate donors in Britain.

POLICE in Londonderry said they believed they foiled an IRA bomb attack on Monday planned a mile from the border with Donegal.

REG BEVINS, a Thatcherite before his time and one of the postwar Merseyside MPs influential in Tory fortunes, has died at the age of 88.

Sceptics hail Blair plan for euro vote

Michael White

THE LABOUR leadership dramatically switched its policy on Europe at the weekend, pledging to stage a referendum before taking sterling into a single currency and dropping its previous claim that a Labour win at the general election might be a sufficient mandate.

The decision was hailed as a victory by Eurosceptics in both main parties — despite Gordon Brown's insistence that it could still put sterling in "the first wave" in 1999.

With Tory Eurosceptics eager to use Labour's shift to push John Major further down the anti-EU path, the federalist European Movement predicted that a referendum could be held — and won by the pro-Europeans — in two years' time, if Tony Blair's team is satisfied that the Franco-German "euro" will help Britain economically.

After reaching agreement last week with Mr Blair, deputy leader John Prescott and shadow foreign secretary Robin Cook, the shadow chancellor said: "It is clear that we support, and see substantial benefits in, a single currency. But we've always said the decision has got to be made in the national economic interests at the time.

"It is precisely because of that I am saying today that it will be necessary to consult opinion during the next Parliament through a referendum if we made a decision to go ahead," Mr Brown said.

That amounted to a heavy hint that, despite fears that a mishandled single currency could cause deflation or worse, Brown as chancellor could still win the argument in cabinet when "first wave" decisions are taken in 1998.

Labour Eurosceptics such as the former cabinet veteran Peter Shore predicted the opposite outcome. "I do not think it would now be possible for a Labour government to join a single currency in the first rush . . . They would first have to pass at least three acts of parliament, including the Euro-referendum bill and one to make the Bank of England independent," said Mr Shore.

Sir Michael Spicer, a Tory Eurosceptic MP, also welcomed Labour's shift despite the leadership's decision.

He urged the Cabinet to up the stakes: "I would certainly like us to make it absolutely clear that we would not join the single currency in the lifetime of the next government," he said.

Liberal Democrat spokesman Charles Kennedy accused Labour of being "in the same position at the Conservatives".

Mr Brown countered: "I wouldn't say our policies are identical at all. The Conservatives are presenting themselves as an anti-European party. We are a pro-European party," he said.

The Labour decision reflects Mr Brown's acceptance that leaving such a fundamental decision to beyond election day, without a firm referendum pledge in its manifesto, would be asking for trouble.

Comment, page 12

Members of the British Shooting Council lobbying MPs at Westminster PHOTOGRAPH: GARRY WEASER

Total handgun ban fails by 25 votes

A TOTAL ban on handguns was rejected by 25 votes in the Commons on Monday. Campaigners watched from the public gallery as the 306-281 result was announced to some shouts of "shame!" in a sombre and crowded House at the close of a highly charged debate.

Four Tory backbenchers, Terry Dicks, sacked last week as a ministerial aide because of his stance, Hugh Dykes, Robert Hughes and David Mellor defied the whip and voted in favour of an outright ban in committee stage debate on the Firearms (Amendment) Bill.

The Home Secretary, Michael Howard, refused to give way on calls for the Government to extend its partial ban — which will lead to the destruction of about 160,000 weapons — to all handguns.

Winding up the debate, Mr Howard insisted the Government had charted the right course between protecting the public and allowing legitimate target shooting in secure gun clubs.

Shadow Scottish Secretary George Robertson asked: "If a mad, crazed, suicidal gunman with 743 rounds of ammunition was to come into this chamber and to kill 17 Members of Parliament and to gravely injure 15 others and then shoot himself within a matter of minutes, would we have waited eight months to be discussing a partial ban on the very instrument which killed so many legislators of this land?"

Mr Howard protested that Mr Robertson's point was "outrageous". Labour had accepted from the outset that the right course was to set up the Cullen inquiry, wait for its report and then legislate speedily, "which is precisely what the Government have done".

Anne Pearston, coordinator of the Dunblane Snowdrop Petition, said the vote was a "betrayal" of the people's trust. She vowed: "It is not the end . . . We will look for the commitment now from all the political parties who support a complete ban on handguns to make that an election commitment."

£4.4 billion surplus boost for Chancellor

Larry Elliott

CHANCELLOR Kenneth Clarke was this week set to pull off a Budget hat-trick of lower taxes, reduced borrowing and higher public spending after official figures showed Britain's booming companies pushing the state finances back into the black last month.

Taken aback by the Government's £4.4 billion surplus in October, some City analysts are predicting Mr Clarke would gamble on a 2p cut in the basic rate of tax as the launch-pad for the election campaign.

However, the Chancellor was eager to play down expectations, noting that the £4.4 billion repayment of debt in October merely brought the Government's finances back on course to hit the borrowing forecast of the summer. Treasury sources stressed that the public sector borrowing requirement figures for last month had been flattered by special factors boosting corporation tax and VAT.

The Chancellor is aware that a giveaway Budget would stoke consumer spending and increase pressure from the Bank of England for higher base rates to combat inflation.

Even so, it was widely assumed in the markets this week that Mr Clarke's fourth Budget on November 26 would move towards a 20 per cent standard rate of income tax, a reduction in next year's £23.4 billion borrowing forecast, and more cash for health and education.

According to the Treasury, government receipts stood at just over £28 billion, compared with spending of £23.6 billion in October. The surplus went some of the way to offsetting the deficit built up in the first six months of 1996/97.

Guardian writers and tax specialists from Coopers & Lybrand will be available to answer readers' questions about the Budget on the Internet. Post your questions on http://guardian.co.uk/budget/ (after the Budget until noon Wednesday) or by email to budget@guardian.co.uk

Inquiry calls second whip

David Hencke

THE cash for questions investigation was widened last week to include a second government minister accused of trying to subvert the initial inquiry into former trade minister Neil Hamilton's undeclared stay at the Ritz Hotel, Paris, and cash payments from Mohamed Al Fayed, the owner of Harrods.

Tony Newton, the Leader of the House, who is chairing the present inquiry, last week wrote to Andrew Mitchell, the junior social security minister, asking him to explain his role two years ago when Mr Hamilton escaped with a mild rebuke from MPs.

Mr Mitchell — who was then both a government whip and a member of the Members' Interests Committee, then examining Mr Hamilton's conduct — is potentially in serious trouble. He was accused by Angela Eagle, a Labour member of that inquiry, of trying to influence its proceedings.

Mr Newton's move follows the leaking of a letter to Dale Campbell-Savours, a Labour committee member, written by Mr Mitchell.

His letter, sent to Richard Ryder, then Chief Whip, showed that Mr Mitchell had used his privileged position on the committee to find out from the Registrar of Members' Interests — where MPs must register directorships and consultancies — whether Mr Hamilton had logged his controversial consultancy with Strategy Network International, a public relations firm.

The registrar is reported as saying the committee would not like this. Mr Mitchell comments to Mr Ryder: "Not very helpful I am afraid."

Mr Newton has asked him to clarify what he meant in the letter. The disclosure of the letter was a fresh embarrassment to Tory members during last week's hearing when another government minister, David Willetts, the Paymaster General, was already struggling to explain a memo he had written to the Chief Whip.

Mr Willetts has been accused of trying to smother the inquiry by suggesting that Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, the Tory grandee chairing it, could declare the complaint *sub judice* or use the "good Tory majority" to rush it through the committee.

Prisoners win early release

Alan Travis

THE first of more than 800 prisoners, mostly burglars and thieves, were released last week after a devastating High Court judgment against the Home Secretary, Michael Howard.

Three judges, including the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, ruled that the way the prison service had calculated release dates of inmates serving concurrent sentences had been unlawfully applied for 30 years. The Home Secretary was refused leave to appeal.

"Early indications are that some 800 serving prisoners are likely to be affected," the Prisons Minister, Ann Widdecombe, said. "About 50 will be eligible for imminent release."

Thousands more prisoners who have already ended their sentences are also likely to be entitled to compensation worth a total of up to £18 million.

The inmates in the test cases were Michelle Carol Evans, who was serving two years for burglary, robbery and assault, and Paul Reid, jailed for two years and three months for burglary and handling stolen goods. Both were released within hours of the court ruling.

The ruling by Lord Bingham, Lord Justice Rose and Mr Justice Blofeld on the way time spent on remand is deducted from concurrent sentences follows the "great escape" over the summer when prisons had to release early 541 inmates serving consecutive sentences. A High Court victory for Mr Howard halting those releases paved the way for last week's decision.

Lord Bingham said that the whole mechanism for working out sentences was a mess: "The principle that a prisoner's release date should be beyond dispute . . . is of great importance." In fact the rules were "not clear to the courts, or the legal profession, or prisoners, or — it would seem — the prison authorities," he said.

The ruling held that the prison service system for calculating remand time to be deducted from multiple sentences was flawed. It only deducted time spent on remand for the most serious crime, rather than the total time awaiting trial.

Mr Howard's new crime bill will give judges the power to decide how much remand time to deduct from multiple sentences in each case.

● Prisoners are to be held in police cells as an emergency measure to cope with the steep rise in the jail population, the director general of the Prison Service, Richard Tilt, revealed. These contingency plans came as the jail population exceeded 58,000 for the first time and amid warnings that overcrowding, money shortages and the inactivity of inmates jeopardised improvements to prison regimes.



'Fat cats' in Labour sights

Chris Barrie and Celia Weston

LABOUR last week served notice on the privatised industries and the Government that it will not back down on plans to levy a windfall tax and that exposing "fat cat" payments to utility industry executives will be high on the party's electoral agenda.

The Opposition hardened its stand against the pay bonanza for some company executives after revelations that a small number of senior managers from the privatised electricity companies made close to £27 million from recent takeovers and mergers.

As pensioners and unions condemned the huge payments in share options and as compensation for loss of office, Labour said it would use this latest evidence of corporate excess to attack Government complacency and promote vigorously its plans for a windfall tax on the privatised utilities.

The compensation payments were made to executives following last year's takeovers of Eastern Group, Norweb, Seeboard, South Wales Electricity, and Manweb. Six regional electricity companies were bought last year as part of the wave of electricity industry takeovers.

Jack Jones, president of the National Pensioners Convention, called for the executive pay bonanza to be used instead to eliminate standing charges on electricity bills for the elderly.

Alan Milburn, a senior member of Labour's Treasury team, warned that the public would be disgusted by the scale of the telephone number salaries and kickbacks. "While executive pay abuse is handing out windfall gains to a few, Labour's windfall tax on the excess profits at the privatised utilities will fund a jobs programme for the many."

Brian Wilson, Labour's campaigns organiser, condemned ministers' protestations about the utilities' inability to afford the windfall tax. "They will sound even more hollow after these revelations." And he attacked the Prime Minister for wielding little influence over his greediest supporters. "On innumerable occasions he has put on his stern voice to say how much he disapproves of fat cat behaviour and they just carry on ignoring him."

But the Trade and Industry Secretary, Ian Lang, declined to condemn the payouts. Boardroom "adjustments" were a matter for the directors concerned, he said. The payouts were "entirely separate" to decisions made by his department on whether to allow further takeovers in the power industry.

Although some utilities are replacing controversial share option schemes, following recommendations on executive pay by the CBI-sponsored Greenbury committee, new long-term incentive plans are likely to prove even more lucrative for utility company directors.

But the Association of British Insurers, representing institutional investors who own one in three of all shares, said that share options were not an appropriate system of reward for newly privatised concerns such as the regional electricity companies.

UK appeal on Hong Kong

Ian Black

BRITAIN last week urged China to abandon destabilising plans to replace Hong Kong's democratically-elected Legislative Council with its own provisional government.

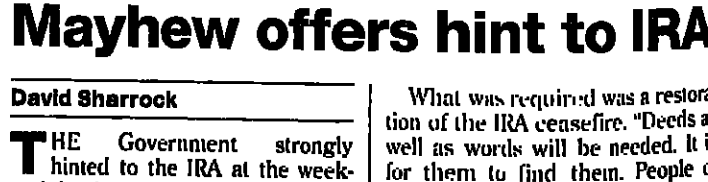
Opening the last scheduled Commons debate on the colony before next June's handover to Beijing, the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, called on China "to think through the full consequences of building this legislative edifice on such shaky foundations. China would have to explain to Hong Kong and the world why it chose to replace a body for which more than a million Hong Kong people voted with one chosen by a hand-picked electorate of 400."

He warned MPs that prospects for agreement with China were "not encouraging". Nor had China been forthcoming with assurances on future safeguards for human rights.

The Foreign Secretary reiterated promises that some 5,000 mostly Indian Hong Kong residents who have been denied full British citizenship would be granted admission to and settlement in Britain "in the unlikely event that they came under pressure to leave Hong Kong".

A Tory backbencher, Sir Patrick Cormack, urged: "If he can go so far, why can't he go one step further?" Former Tory minister David Howell urged Mr Rifkind and the Home Secretary to find "a noble solution to this small but important problem".

Coming home . . . The stone of Scone crossed the Tweed into Scotland last week, under the eye of 40 King's Own Scottish Borderers. It is being kept safe from Plantagenet ghosts and nationalist cat burglars in the secure room of a government laboratory PHOTO: MURDO MACLEOD



Mayhew offers hint to IRA

David Sharrock

THE Government strongly hinted to the IRA at the weekend that it would respond positively to a renewed ceasefire when Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, agreed point by point with a speech made by Martin McGuinness 24 hours earlier.

Speaking from the scene of the IRA's Manchester bomb, Sir Patrick asked a series of rhetorical questions which both Mr McGuinness, Sinn Fein's chief negotiator, and the party's president Gerry Adams have repeatedly posed.

"What is the British Government's objective in Northern Ireland? . . . Is it, as some claim, to achieve victory? . . . Is it to deliberately stall any prospect of progress in the hope of permanently excluding Sinn Fein? The answer is an emphatic no," he said.

Then, carefully mirroring Sinn Fein language, Sir Patrick made a series of assertions. The Government's objective was not "to impose a particular outcome" but to reach "a comprehensive agreement through democratic and peaceful methods".

Sir Patrick said history would show the IRA made a tragic and wicked mistake when it abandoned its ceasefire "just when it became possible to see that negotiations, with Sinn Fein included, could be put in place".

What was required was a restoration of the IRA ceasefire. "Deeds as well as words will be needed. It is for them to find them. People of goodwill all over the world trust they will."

He then said: "Martin McGuinness says the talks must be inclusive. We agree . . . [he] says that decommissioning must, without blocking progress, be dealt with to the satisfaction of all the participants in the process of negotiations.

"We say the way forward is for decommissioning to take place in accordance with the recommendations of the Mitchell report."

"Finally, Martin McGuinness said real negotiations are the only way forward. We agree wholeheartedly," said Sir Patrick. "And that must mean dependably repudiating the bomb and the bullet."

● Anti-terrorist police are hunting three suspected IRA members who are feared to have escaped with bomb-making equipment and firearms after breaking into more than 50 storage units in London.

The audacious break-in would seem to indicate that the IRA is both anxious to step up the mainland bombing campaign and is short of the necessary materials. The raid is the latest in the cat-and-mouse game between anti-terrorist officers and IRA active service units which has seen a series of arrests and seizures over the past three months.

He started in the '70s and now he has to finish

MAGNUS MAGNUSSON started asking questions in 1972 — and he will finish next year, *writes Andrew Culf.*

Mastermind, television's cerebral quiz with a black leather hot seat, is being phased out by the BBC because it has drawn "to the end of its natural life".

The BBC is beginning the search for new quizzes after the show's final contest. Audiences had dropped to about 6 million in its new Monday night slot compared with its 20 million viewers in the late 1970s.

Mr Magnusson, who last week launched a CD-Rom version of the show in London, said: "Every good thing has to come to an end — and I would rather it ended with a bang than a whimper."

But there was a tinge of unhappiness from the Icelandic-born question master, who plans to write his Mastermind memoirs. He told BBC radio: "It is not a shock — a slight disappointment, obviously, because you get terribly fond of a programme like that."

Kevin Ashman, aged 37, a civil servant who scored the programme's highest total in 1995, said it was a shame.

He did not find the experience of being in the black chair intimidating. "But different people suffered to different degrees. The real pressure was waiting for your turn — and when you sat in the chair it really was do or die."

Mr Magnusson, aged 67, will equal the record for the longest-serving host of a continuously running quiz show, set by Bamber Gascoigne on University Challenge.

Tory delight at big drop in claimants

Richard Thomas

THE Government received a welcome boost last week when a sharp cut in the jobless statistics raised the prospect of unemployment falling below 2 million before Christmas.

Announcing a 40,800 drop in the jobless total during October — to its lowest level for more than five years — Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, hailed a "sparkling performance" by the economy.

He said the fall in the number of people out of work and claiming benefits to a seasonally adjusted 2,030,000 demonstrated the advantages of a free labour market and John Major's opt-out from the European social chapter.

"Britain is on the move," he said. "More of our people have jobs and fewer are out of work than any other major European country. Britain's flexible, deregulated labour market delivers jobs."

Although the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said a backlog of claim registrations resulting from the introduction of the Jobseekers' Allowance had flattered the drop by around 10,000, Whitehall and City experts said 30,000 people could come off the count during November and deliver a Christmas present to the Conservatives. The ONS said the average monthly fall since August had been 32,000.

In the City, the bigger than expected drop — which pushed the rate of unemployment down to 7.2 per cent of the workforce, from 7.4 per cent the previous month — increased speculation of another rise in interest rates to head off inflation.

The good news on jobs has spread to the previously embattled manufacturing sector with a 13,000 jump in factory jobs — all of which went to men — in September.

Labour said the claimant count figures understated the depth of joblessness. Shadow employment minister Ian McCartney said: "Tory unemployment figures are as bogus as Tory promises on tax. The truth is that one in five working households has no one in a job."

Mr Heseltine used the figures to condemn Labour's proposals for a minimum wage and shorter working hours, but the figures hinted at a new readiness in the workforce to strike for better conditions. In September, 123,000 days were lost to strikes, the highest September figure since 1988.

● A Mori poll for the Times shows Tory support at its highest level since 1993. The Tories are on 33 per cent, compared with 28 per cent last month. Labour is down six points at 50 per cent, the lowest rating since Tony Blair became leader. The Liberal Democrats stay on 12 per cent.

Barristers set to fight fixed-fee proposals

Clare Dyer

THE Bar Council is fighting proposals by Lord Mackay, the Lord Chancellor — backed by judges — to impose fixed rates of pay on barristers in civil and family cases paid for by legal aid.

Barristers are furious that the initial proposals, which are open to negotiation, limit QCs to a flat £500 for every day in court after the first day. At present, fees vary according to the difficulty of the case, but many QCs receive £1,000 a day or more, courtesy of the taxpayer.

While criminal barristers' fees are regulated, those handling civil legal aid cases can claim whatever they feel the case is worth. Bills are frequently slashed — "taxed down" in legal jargon — by the district judges who approve them for payment.

While criminal QCs command £500 a day in heavy cases, rising to £750 for a complex fraud, some QCs in big child care cases or complicated divorce cases put in claims for £1,500 or £2,000 per day. Claims for brief fees — for case preparation and the first day of trial — can be as high as £30,000 or £35,000 per QC in a large child abuse case.

This contrasts with the Lord Chancellor's proposal of a £5,500 brief fee for cases lasting 11-20 days.

David Penry-Davey QC, chairman of the Bar Council, said: "These proposals are unworkable, profoundly unfair and will not produce greater access to justice . . . Practitioners of any seniority or experience will be driven out of civil legal aid work altogether. It will be uneconomic."

Judges at all levels, from district judge to law lord, have voiced growing concerns about the high fees claimed by some barristers in civil legal aid cases. Lord Woolf, Master of the Rolls, warned the Bar's annual conference last year that barristers risked "killing the golden goose".

One district judge said: "One of the things we are very concerned about is the gravy train, particularly in children cases. Exorbitant fees are charged by counsel, which are regularly taxed down."

World Service rebuke for Birt

Andrew Culf

THE BBC was accused by the Government last week of exaggerating the World Service's funding shortfall and unnecessarily threatening the closure of up to six foreign language services.

Jeremy Hanley, a Foreign Office minister, claimed the corporation was waging a media war to influence the Budget. He told the foreign affairs committee: "We think it is wrong for the BBC to trail the closure of language services, perhaps as a negotiating ploy ahead of the public expenditure statement."

The BBC has warned that the service, funded by government grant-in-aid, faces a £5.3 million shortfall next year, despite making £6.5 million savings. It has warned of a £40 million funding gap over five years. Mr Hanley said the shortfall amounted to only £2.3 million for next year, and it should be able to continue with its present output.

The BBC's plans included a £10 million investment in a 24-hour news service, he said. "Surely cutting back on planned expansion might be desirable rather than ending existing services."

He denied the BBC had discussed closing any of its 43 foreign language services with the Foreign Office and he rebuked John Birt, the BBC's director general, for giving the Foreign Office only 24 hours' notice of the restructuring, which will result in the merger of the BBC's domestic and World Service programme making.

● The campaign by Mr Birt for an above-inflation increase in the television licence fee has been rejected by the Government despite a warning from Mr Birt that deteriorating finances could diminish the BBC's role as national broadcaster.

Widow turns down £2m

NO PENSIONER in Hull was safe last week after the bizarre revelation that a £2.1 million National Lottery jackpot ticket is lying uncashed on an elderly local widow's front room table, *writes Martin Wainwright.*

Reporters, treasure hunters and officials of Camelot, the Lottery organisers, began a systematic attempt to persuade the reluctant winner to break cover — at least to the modest extent of claiming the prize.

The strangest twist yet in the unpredictable history of lottery oddities followed an unsigned letter to the Hull Daily Mail. The woman's letter said the winning ticket, from May 24, had been bought by her husband shortly before his death. "It was a grand feeling to win, but too late."

The woman then gave her age, courteously blanked out by the newspaper, and added: "Sorry, I don't wish to give my name. I am sure the fuss would finish me off. The ticket is on the front room table. I keep looking at it — if only I could have my life over."

The six-month deadline for claiming the jackpot runs out this week, and Camelot warned that the money would go automatically into the good causes pool if the woman failed to contact them.

We'll help you save for a very rainy day.



The first thing you notice when you go home won't be the white cliffs. The grey sky, more likely.

So to save the outlook getting any gloomier, Woolwich Guernsey can help you create your own personal silver lining.

It's called the Sterling International Gross Account. And because it's run especially for expats, we listen to expats.

We hear, for instance, you want consistently high interest rates. So we make sure the rates we pay are consistently among the very highest.

You tell us you don't like to be charged for withdrawing your own money.

Fair point. So – apart from electronic transfers – we don't charge you a penny.

We understand you'd prefer the rates to go up as you invest more money. Again, we're happy to comply.

And we know you don't always get to read a newspaper from home. So if your interest rates should change for any reason we'll write and tell you personally.

The result is an account that's appeared over and over again in financial Best Buy columns. And a brighter financial forecast for expats.

Fill in the coupon and you could be in for a glorious return.

I want a silver lining. Please send me details of the Woolwich Guernsey Sterling International Gross Account.

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms

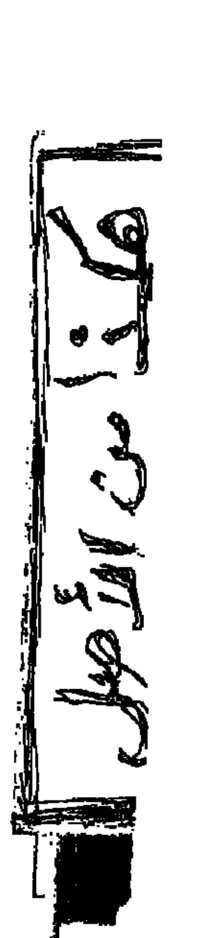
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Let the voters have the final say

LABOUR'S change of policy last weekend on holding a referendum to join a European single currency means that, for the moment, the two major parties speak as one on this vital question. Yet unlike some earlier Labour policy shifts, which appeared to have been made out of electoral cowardice rather than for reasons of strong principle, this one is the right decision taken for the right reasons. If and when any British government decides to join the euro group, it must do so for economic and political reasons. Politically, it is essential that there should be public support. Any other course would be disastrous. In theory, such support can be expressed either through a general election or a referendum, as Labour continued to argue until last weekend. Yet to claim that a general election victory would be such a mandate was always a delusion. It might be sound traditional British constitutional doctrine. But it is weak late-20th century democratic politics.

A referendum is required for several reasons. The first is that to abandon one's domestic currency is, to put it mildly, a matter of genuine constitutional moment on which the people are entitled to have the final say. Without a referendum, there is a great danger that British political life would become even more of a plaything for restless populist businessmen and absentee press barons than it is already. The absence of a referendum would become the dominant political issue, swamping and distorting all other issues and allowing the opportunity for the tabloid press to stir an increasingly xenophobic and ugly political mood. In fact if not in law, British membership would not be settled until a referendum, as was also the case 20 years ago when Britain joined the Common Market. Better to acknowledge that now than be forced to admit it later.

A second referendum has become necessary for the continuation of British membership of the European project. But it is important that it should be the right sort of referendum. Labour's announcement rightly mirrors that of the Conservatives, insisting that such a plebiscite would be confirmatory rather than declaratory. It will mean that the referendum will only take place after the terms are clearly known, after the Cabinet has decided to join and after legislation has passed through Parliament. Under the plans envisaged by Conservatives and Labour, cabinet ministers will be bound by collective responsibility with none of the free voting allowed by Harold Wilson in 1975.

This is the right way to do these things. It ensures that the referendum supports rather than pre-empts the parliamentary process, and it makes parliamentary government possible rather than impossible. The fact that Labour has made the right constitutional choice over the European referendum underlines the constitutional danger in its decision to have pre-emptive referendums on Scotland and Wales. People should vote in their referendums at the end, not the start, of the parliamentary process, and there is a strong case for Parliament to adopt constitutional legislation to enshrine such rules in a Referendums Act.

Some supporters of the single currency will be shocked by Labour's decision and by the consequent inevitability of a referendum campaign on Europe. They should not be afraid. The matter needs to be argued out not settled behind closed doors. It is not a matter of simplistic pro- or anti-Europe principle, but a matter of collective national judgment at the appropriate time. If joining the single currency eventually becomes the right course for Britain, then the case needs to be explained and won. In all probability, that is what will happen, just as it did in 1975 when the campaign began with a No majority in the opinion polls and ended with a two-to-one victory for Yes.

It is greatly to the discredit of several of the other member states of the European Union that they do not take the same approach. This is too important to be left solely to governments, parliaments and to constitutional courts. A European single currency voted for by the people of Europe could be strong. A currency foisted on unwilling European peoples could be the source of future economic, social and political catastrophes.

None of last weekend's events makes the possibility that Labour would actually decide to join the single currency in the first wave necessarily stronger. It is possible to interpret the referendum choice both as an indicator that Labour wants to join and simultaneously as an indicator that it would rather put the decision off. It is very unlikely that Labour will want to move the issue along any further on this side of the general election. The Labour party will hope that the Conservatives are now spurred into fresh arguments about whether to oppose any British entry during the next Parliament, an option that could split the Tory party. If that leaves Labour as a party prepared to join the single currency in principle but which in practice will only do so if the time and the conditions are unambiguously right — and always subject to the approval of a referendum — then that is the right position to be in.

Bashing Brussels one more time

THE BRITISH government's fierce resistance to the European Court of Justice's ruling on a 48-hour maximum working week owes much more to appeasing its Eurosceptic wing and positioning itself against the Labour party than it does to the underlying merits of the case. If only John Major could rise to such impassioned rhetoric on an issue that matters. What is at issue is not whether people ought to work a 48-hour week but whether they should be compelled to. The judgment of the European Court exempts lots of key workers — such as nurses, junior hospital and transport workers — altogether and the rest are only affected if they are forced to work against their will for an average of 48 hours over a four-month reference period that can be extended by agreement to six or even 12 months. This accommodates the sort of situation — like a sudden rush of export deliveries — that is worrying the minority of businesses getting steamed up about it. Otherwise, what is this all about?

Surely the Prime Minister doesn't seriously think that Britain's prosperity is dependent on people working more than 60 per cent of their waking days (excluding travelling time) for most of the year, leaving little time for the family values the Conservatives so enthusiastically espouse. As the Liberal Democrat trade spokesman Nick Harvey said: "If there are many companies who are forcing people to work more than 48 hours and not even giving them three weeks' holiday, they jolly well shouldn't be." Perhaps MPs should try two or three weeks' holiday a year themselves instead of three months (and that's just the summer bit) to see what it's like.

The ruling is fully justified by the health risks attached to arduous hours, as the Government's own report, prepared by Professor Harrington of Birmingham University, indicated (even though the Government didn't publish it). He argued that there was plenty of medical evidence to show that a 48-hour week was bad for health. In these circumstances, a judgment laying down limits to compulsory working will be a constraint on exploitative employers while allowing long hours to be worked on a jointly agreed basis.

This leaves the crucial question: whether it is economically sensible for people to be working such long hours when millions have no job at all. There is no mechanical relationship between overtime and unemployment, though some economists, such as Paul Gregg of the National Institute, argue that if the long-term reduction in hours worked (from 57 hours a week in 1860) had continued into the 1980s, instead of grinding to a halt, then a million extra jobs could have been created. According to the Employment Institute, total hours worked in spring 1995 were up 31 million compared with three years earlier, a rise of 3.5 per cent; so a lot of the extra wealth was earned by people in employment rather than those looking for work. Since a lot of overtime is at premium rates, it could actually be cheaper for companies to employ more people at ordinary rates to do the work instead of leaving its existing labour force almost certainly tired from such long hours. If unemployment declined, then the Government too would gain from not having to shell out so much unemployment pay.

Mr Major has his own motives for adopting the stance he has. Part of it may be to force Labour into a stance which is more in favour of regulation and rule from Brussels. But if he thinks there are lots of votes to be won by forcing employees to work long hours with short holidays, then he must have been talking to some pretty strange people. Maybe he should get back to his soap box quickly to find out what people are really thinking.

Corporate greed set against people's need

Geoffrey Chandler

COMPANIES will go where economic opportunity calls. In many countries — such as China, Nigeria and Colombia — opportunity occurs in the context of gross human rights violations committed by government or its security forces. Corporate and national interest are more potent influences than moral repugnance: to seek a selective boycott or disinvestment in a world where employment and national wealth depend increasingly on the competitive exploitation of overseas opportunity would be to whistle in the wind or surrender to the least scrupulous.

Company influence is limited, but real, and readily wielded for tax or regulatory concessions. If it were used for the improvement of human rights, the world could have a powerful weapon for its betterment and companies a better climate for their investment.

But, say companies, that is not for us. Human rights are domestic politics in which we must not interfere. The business of business is business. Well, is it? The obligations legitimately expected of companies today include care of the physical environment — though this took decades of argument and pressure. Concern for the human rights environment, however, meets with indifference or evasion.

Yet there are arguments of self-interest as well as principle which should cause re-thinking in boardrooms, even if recent reports of Shell in Nigeria and BP in Colombia fail to shake corporate complacency more broadly. Abuse of human rights threatens the stability essential to long-term investment. While such abuse stems usually from governments, there are human rights hazards inherent in a company's own operations posing questions which any thinking company would be wise to answer in advance of encountering them. Will companies abandon their employees arrested for some ill-defined economic crime which may in China incur the death penalty? Will they buy the products of forced or prison labour? Will they use the army or police to defend their installations, perhaps trampling human rights? Will they buy arms for their own protection without adopting international norms to avoid misuse?

All these things have happened. And if the corporate answer to these questions is Yes, how long would companies and their shareholders resist international condemnation and the damage to reputation which would ensue?

In the public mind, profiting *under* an oppressive regime finds an easy, if unjust, transition to profiting *from* it. Corporate silence in the context of world condemnation risks being taken by the offending government to be acquiescence in what it does. The arguments of self-interested action will grow in force as public opinion and pressure groups provide a substitute for business leaders' tunnel vision.

The argument of principle — that human rights transcend national boundaries and are not a matter of "domestic politics" or cultural difference — lies in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

This calls on everyone — individuals and institutions — to "promote respect for" and "secure the recognition and observance of" such rights as freedom from torture and arbitrary arrest, the right to a fair trial and equality before the law. This not only legitimises companies' right to speak out on these matters; it imposes an obligation to do so.

A company's freedom to exist and work lies ultimately not in the law, but in the "licence to operate" granted it by society. This "licence" broadly represents society's expectations. The abolition of slavery and of child chimney-sweeps, and the improvement of health and safety at work, were in their day vigorously fought by all but the most enlightened business leaders on the grounds that they would destroy enterprise and prosperity.

Today the Department of Trade Industry in Britain delegates any problems of human rights to the Foreign Office. The Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, was silent on the issue when, in May, he led a large contingent of businessmen to China. But while government indeed has a role, it is different from that of companies which, as effectively citizens of the countries in which they work, have a continuing opportunity to improve the situation.

IN A series of recent advertisements Mobil argues, self-servingly, that the company should not "cut and run". Yes indeed. It is therefore hard to see this as anything more than a smokescreen for the real immediate issue — Mobil's failure to follow Shell's example, however inadequate and belated, in speaking out over Nigeria where the company proclaims a significant presence.

There are, of course, companies that manufacture and trade in torture equipment or willingly see their products used for oppressive purposes. But they are the rare exception whose exposure and condemnation should not be left, as now, by the business world to the media or the voluntary sector. Business has too long shunned any central moral code or moral arbiter on any matter other than money.

The voluntary sector does not uniquely hold the high moral ground. Companies also contain people with ideals — who may come face to face with violations, and must ultimately force their companies to act of their own volition rather than be shamed into action by world opinion.

To exaggerate the role or complicity of companies does no good to the cause of human rights. It would be a sad day for democracy if transnational companies really had the power their more vociferous critics attribute to them. But for companies to present themselves as impotent is to invite exaggerated ripostes.

Companies have a clear choice: to use what influence they have, or to do nothing. If they speak out they may incur the anger of government. If silent, the certain price is reputation — which is, of course, everything.

Sir Geoffrey Chandler is a former senior executive of the Royal Dutch/Shell Group and architect of Shell's first Statement of General Business Principles. He chairs Amnesty International's UK Business Group

Le Monde

Mbeki must win over the Pretorian guard

Sceptics are voicing doubts about the calibre of President Mandela's chosen successor, writes **Frédéric Chambon** in Johannesburg

THE CHARACTER of Thabo Mbeki, heir apparent to the presidency of South Africa, has been called into question by the republic's press, one newspaper raising the question: "Enigmatic Mbeki: shark in politics or locomotive of the new South Africa?"

Pressed to dispel the ambiguity over his succession, President Nelson Mandela declared last summer: "Mbeki is a very talented and influential man. If the [African National Congress] chooses him as chairman, I believe it will be a good decision."

Mandela has said he will not stand for election in 1999 and would give up his post as chairman of the ANC at the end of next year. Mbeki, vice-chairman of the ANC and vice-president of the government, has Mandela's backing to assume the leadership of the ANC, and consequently become head of the state. With the ANC still enjoying the backing of the majority, any candidate who has its backing in 1999 is likely to win.

However, Mandela himself has pointed out that no decision has yet been taken officially, and some commentators feel this is likely to weaken Mbeki's position and could lead to a war of succession. Apparently, Mandela does not want to deprive himself of an alternative in the event of Mbeki failing in government.

Meanwhile Mbeki continues to enjoy Mandela's support while his biggest rival for the leadership, Cyril Ramaphosa, appears to have accepted that the succession is sewn up, and has announced he is quitting politics and going into business.

Mandela's preference for Mbeki over Ramaphosa surfaced in 1994, and since then the president has been handing over an increasing proportion of government business to Mbeki to raise his profile as a statesman.

However, Mbeki has still to win recognition among the public. For that he will have to change the negative image painted of him in the South African press.

Most newspapers make him out to be over-ambitious, removing anybody who stands in the way of his path to the presidency. They say he lacks warmth and often hold him responsible for the shortcomings of the government. "That's not my first worry when I wake up," Mbeki says of such criticism. He attributes the hostility to his repeated calls for better representation for blacks in the South African media, which is still dominated by whites.

An elegant man in his fifties with a neat salt-and-pepper beard, Mbeki is essentially a backroom boy and party executive. The son of Govan Mbeki, the former ANC chairman who was imprisoned at the same time as Mandela, he spent most of the years of the struggle against apartheid in exile, representing the movement in several African countries and Britain.

The question mark over Mbeki has left ANC supporters, the white minority and foreign investors in a state of confusion. The investors are wondering whether, in the event of his succession, Mbeki would be able to pursue the present government policy — a mix of prudence and moderation. They are also questioning whether he could embody, as Mandela does, the spirit of reconciliation between the communities.

The vice-president is aware of the difficulty of donning the mantle of a living symbol. But he points out that national reconciliation is a necessity and that the whole of the ANC movement is committed to it, not just its leader. "All throughout this process we have had discussions among ourselves in the ANC and with the white government," says Mbeki. "We arrived at the conclusion that the only solution possible was a reconciliation respecting the interests of both sides. This line will be maintained after Nelson Mandela's departure."

Mbeki has no intention of giving in to the ANC's left wing, which is pressing for an economic policy weighted towards righting the inequalities bequeathed by apartheid.

"People's expectations are legitimate," says Mbeki. "But some are using them to further their personal ambitions. When you ask them whether they have an alternative policy to propose, they don't know what to say."

Labour unions are becoming impatient but his advice to them is: "We can earmark only 10 per cent of the budget for development. The rest is earmarked for daily expenditures. The unions should keep this in mind and not concentrate on their members' immediate interests."

Mbeki knows that the government has to satisfy both the black population's expectations and the fears of the white minority. "But the black population knows quite well that nothing can be done overnight," he says. "The important thing is that a perceptible improvement in their daily lives is sustaining their hopes. As for the whites, they have to realise that it is in their own interest to contribute to the process of transformation, for it is the only guarantee of a stable future."

(November 13)

Uneasy relations . . . Mbeki attributes press criticism to his calls for better representation of blacks in the South African media
PHOTOGRAPH: ELLEN ELMENDORP

Guatemala back on the road to recovery

After 36 years of conflict, there is hope of peace, writes **Georges Marion** in Guatemala City

GUATEMALA still has its overcrowded shanty towns, street children with noses buried in solvent-soaked rags and poor Indians on the edge of society. But if the good news announced on November 11 turns into reality, there will soon be peace in Guatemala after 36 years of fighting, some 100,000 deaths and tens of thousands people reported missing.

The first negotiations to put an end to the fighting that began back in 1960, took place in 1991 and continued at irregular intervals. On November 11, the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG) guerrillas and the government finally declared they had agreed a peace treaty to be signed on December 29. The announcement was made at the sixth Ibero-American summit in the Chilean capital, Santiago. In the meantime several partial agreements will be signed in Norway, Sweden and Spain.

Since Alvaro Arzu's election as president in January, the peace momentum has rolled forward, sweeping away sceptics and disarming advocates of the status quo. The talks progressed in stages: several partial agreements had been agreed earlier, particularly on human rights, agrarian issues and the army's position in a civilian society. However, there remained a difficult issue to be settled — the reintegration of soldiers into civilian life, and the delicate question of an amnesty.

The guerrillas' concern not to fall victim to death squads after they lay down their arms — as happened in El Salvador when the armed struggle ended — is matched by the concern of soldiers threatened with court actions for crimes committed during the war.

The terms for an amnesty remain to be settled, although ways and means for doing so seem to have been worked out. Most observers give credit for the settlement to President Arzu. While nobody expected a miracle when the National Advancement Party (PAN) candidate was elected president, there is little but praise for him today.

"For the first time in a long while, there is a genuine government determination to improve the situation," noted Gerald Plantegenest, deputy director of the UN mission in Guatemala, which is monitoring the application of the human rights agreement reached in March 1994.

"Arzu is a strong-willed man who'll go all the way, which doesn't happen often in Guatemala," said one diplomat who has been following the situation closely. And Arzu's closest adviser, Ricardo Stein noted: "I'm 48, but it's the first time that the word 'hope' has become part of my vocabulary."

The new president also appears to have overcome the reservations of guerrilla leaders who have been regularly holding talks with government representatives in Mexico City. Arzu's aides say the talks are being held not between enemies negotiating a compromise, but as partners discussing the country's future. It certainly helps that there have been no serious incidents on the ground to disturb the prevailing atmosphere of trust.

When armed patrols from both sides bump into one another in the mountains, they take care to avoid causing an incident. A few weeks ago a URNG unit took over a police station without firing a shot and left taking the weapons with them.

"The seizure of the weapons was a spontaneous, unplanned act," said one of the intermediaries who helped defuse the incident. "The man responsible for the action was given a severe dressing down by his superiors."

On October 20, the guerrilla movement mounted another spectacular coup in the capital. Taking advantage of a ceremony marking the 1944 revolution, which was crushed with the support of the United States, some 30 masked guerrillas ran up their flag next to the Guatemalan flag at the National Palace.

Observers were unsure whether it was another "uncontrolled" incident or a deliberate show of force. But the special police units deployed around the square chose not to intervene: not so long ago they would have opened fire.

THE progress towards peace should not encounter resistance from the armed forces which, government officials say, have been neutralised — hostile officers have been dismissed or had their assignments changed.

Since the start of the year, 200 officers have been dismissed. Plans to cut the strength of the army by a third, the disbanding of the civil defence patrols and the symbolically important announcement that the state is ready to sell off a part of the army's holdings are helping to weaken the power of a corps that governed the country for so long.

But the threat today could come from economic forces. The peace policy goes hand-in-hand with the will to modernise the state, fight corruption and free the country of the trappings of a banana republic left by the 1954 *coup d'état*, as businessmen, generals and senior officials, still stunned by the arrest of Alfredo Moreno, have just learned to their cost.

A civilian who worked with the armed forces and later with customs, Moreno was considered untouchable. Over the years he built up a financial empire with alleged links to the secret service, the banks, the administration and customs. Moreno was arrested on September 17 on charges of smuggling and other offences, while warrants were served on 10 of his associates.

The following day, the vice-minister of defence and the interior minister resigned, and several senior members of the customs and police services were dismissed or arrested. Today 200 investigators are working on the biggest corruption case uncovered in Guatemala.

"It's a smuggling racket in which real estate, banks and drugs are involved. It could only have flourished in a tradition of impunity that had become a culture," said an official who is close to the inquiry.

Everyone is waiting to see how everyone else is going to react. There are rumours of an attack and various threats have been made. For the moment, though, the threats amount to no more than words. There is nothing to show that those who are making menacing noises are in any position to carry out their threats.

(November 15)

'There's only one ethnic group in Rwanda, Rwandan'

Dominique Franche, a social geographer with an expert knowledge of Rwanda, talks about the complexity of the issues

THE HUTUS and Tutsis do not form two different ethnic groups. An ethnic group is defined by a unity of language, culture, religion or territory. The Tutsis, Hutus and Twas (the third population group in Rwanda) live together. So there is no territorial differentiation. They speak the same language and share the same culture and religion.

They used to specialise in certain areas of the economy, but not systematically — Tutsis tended to be herdsmen and Hutus farmers. The conflict can't be described as ethnic, since there's only one ethnic group in Rwanda, and it's Rwandan.

The idea that Hutus and Tutsis were physically different was first aired in the 1860s by the British explorer John Speke, who was struck by certain physiological differences between them. He deduced — incorrectly — that they were two different races.

Anyone who attempts to pinpoint those differences is likely to get it wrong. The only accurate available data was gathered by a German anthropologist in 1907-08, who found a 12cm difference in average height between Hutus and Tutsis. Now that's exactly the same difference that existed in France between a conscript and a senator in 1815. The difference in height can be explained by their different lifestyles and eating habits, and by the fact that Tutsi noblemen, unlike Hutus, did not till the land.

The trouble is that all anthropological work on the Tutsis used to focus solely on those Tutsis who belonged to the court of the Rwandan king. They didn't have the same physical traits as people living on the outer confines of the kingdom, who are now also called Tutsis. The model of central Rwanda has always been applied to the whole of Rwandan territory. What's more, that same model was applied to neighbouring Burundi, even though its society was very different.

There are, it is true, a number of easily discernable physical differences between them, and far be it from me to deny those differences, as some specialists do despite all the evidence. But what does it prove? The same phenomenon exists in France too.

Once you start drawing a parallel between physical traits and the alleged existence of an ethnic or racial group, then you have to take the argument to its logical conclusion and make the same mistake as those Europeans who, between the wars, claimed that fairhaired people with blue eyes and darkhaired people with dark eyes belonged to two different races.

There's another differentiation factor: sexual selection. Ideals of beauty are not the same in the two groups. I often asked Hutu men what they looked for when choosing a wife. "Strong arms," they replied — the Hutu farmer needs a sturdily built wife who can cultivate the fields. Tutsis in the king's circle had different ideals of beauty.

It took me a long time to decide what term to use to differentiate between Hutus and Tutsis, since I had rejected the term "ethnic group". The notion of social class can't be transposed to Africa, as it has too many irrelevant connotations — at the time of the Rwandan kingdom there was a social class of Tutsi noblemen, but there were also poor Tutsis known as "little Tutsis", who formed a different class.

The word "caste" doesn't apply either, because it presupposes an economic polarisation that has never existed and a notion of purity that is utterly foreign to the traditional Rwandan or Burundian mind-set.

The best term is "community". What we have here are two recently constituted communities, one Hutu, the other Tutsi, united by their hatred and fear of each other and thirst for revenge. What is now going on is a civil war between élites who are fighting for power. They have manipulated the population by dividing it up into communities, which have been dragged into the conflict.



ILLUSTRATION: PATRICK LESTIENNE

The history of Rwanda, like that of Burundi, has been distorted by Pères Blancs missionaries, academics, and certain colonial administrators, who all trotted out more or less the same story. They made the Tutsis out to be a superior race which had conquered the region and enslaved the Hutus.

Missionaries taught the Hutus that historical fallacy, which was the result of racist European concepts being applied unthinkingly to an African reality. At the end of the fifties the Hutus used that discourse to react against the Tutsis.

This isn't a conflict where there are baddies on one side and goodies on the other. Before the colonial era, the feudal Tutsis were very cruel to the peoples they subjugated. Mutual hatred has built up for three reasons. First, the colonial administration made blunders which have never been properly exposed. When Rwanda became independent, the Belgians sided with the Hutu regime. They had started the ball rolling in 1931, when they decided that identity cards should indicate whether the bearer was Hutu, Tutsi or Twa. Most academics have not gone back to original sources, preferring instead to repeat the version of events to be found in traditional historiography.

Secondly, Rwandans and Burundians have used that discourse to try to keep power solely in the hands of small élites. Those élites were not Hutu or Tutsi, but simply regional. They might consist, for example, of northern Hutus in the case of Rwanda from 1973 onwards, or of Tutsis from a small region the other side of the border in the case of Burundi. Elites in either camp have manipulated history in a bid to divert attention from real demographic and economic problems.

Lastly, the collective memory of those societies is oral. People who had first-hand knowledge of what relations between Hutus and Tutsis were like in the old days are now dead.

When I started my research 15 years ago, there were only a few old people left whom I could question. The younger generations have lived in constant fear of being massacred, a factor that has only strengthened the historical distortion.

The 1994 massacres certainly qualified as genocide, according to the Nuremberg definition of genocide as the massacre of a "national, ethnical, racial or religious group". It should not be forgotten that many Hutus died because they refused to massacre Tutsis. In that part of the world, the moment you stick up for people — or at least are seen not to be hostile to them — you belong to the same group as they do.

ANOTHER crucial factor of conflict is the shortage of land. Rwanda and Burundi have the densest population of any country in black Africa. And it is a population which consists exclusively of farmers and herdsmen, and therefore needs land. Because of an ideology that has consistently encouraged people to stay on the land, no industries or services have grown up. What's more, the clergy, who are extremely powerful, have been fighting tooth and nail against birth control.

It has been suggested that two homogeneous entities, a "Hutuland" and a "Tutsiland", could be set up. But where would one put the two groups? They both lay claim to the same land, where they have always cohabited.

Equally irrational is the idea of redrawing regional borders. Every country in black Africa would start calling for border changes, often with much more justification than in the case of Rwanda and Burundi, whose borders do at least reflect some degree of human unity. But then what right have we to deny the peoples of Africa a practice we pursued in Europe for centuries?

Dominique Franche was speaking to Jean-Pierre Langellier.

(November 12)

Wealthy welcome to the China Club

Francis Deron in Beijing

THE most spectacular symbol of capitalism's slow but sure return to China is the China Club Beijing, an exclusive establishment located only a stone's throw from the People's Palace. It costs a cool $20,000 to join. After that, a $1,500 annual subscription fee entitles members to dine in tasteful surroundings at astronomical prices.

The club is owned by David Tang, an extremely wealthy member of Hong Kong's jet set. He earlier attracted attention when he opened the China Club in the British colony, an ultra-select establishment where no money changes hands in such vulgar forms as cash, cheques or credit cards. Everything is on account.

The interior decoration of the Hong Kong club conjures up the atmosphere of two periods in China's recent history: the legendary Shanghai of the thirties, with its elegant furniture and luxury tableware, and the Maoist Cultural Revolution, evoked by a collection of artefacts which recall the personality cults of the time, from Mao's to that of the legendary Lei Feng, a humble soldier who was killed in a traffic accident after having done his utmost to "serve the people".

There are no restrictions on the art of paradox in Hong Kong, especially if it keeps the cash register ringing. But in Beijing — until recently at least — greater discretion was called for. To judge by the opening of the China Club Beijing, that would no longer seem to be the case.

Tang could not have chosen more suitable premises for his club than the former residence of Yuan Shikai, the republic's second president, who died in 1916 after having tried to restore the empire that had been brought down five years earlier.

The building, in the ancient Beijing style, consists of a series of pavilions constructed around square courtyards. Under the People's Republic, "Yuan Shikai's House" was turned into a restaurant specialising in the highly spiced cuisine of Sichuan, Deng Xiaoping's native province. It became the grand old man's favourite eaterie.

On September 21, after passing into the hands of "international capitalism" under the terms of a 20-year lease, the China Club Beijing was inaugurated in the presence of 400 distinguished guests. Passengers on a number 7 bus, blocked in the normally quiet street where the club is located, looked on wide-eyed as a succession of limos dropped off guests, who were escorted into the building by smartly dressed hostesses and private security guards.

Tang was in seventh heaven: "This is something I've dreamt of doing for 20 years. I needed all the support I could get from Beijing City Council to be able to persuade the tourist bureau to set up a joint-venture company that would run the club."

He urged his guests to "come here often and and spend as much money as you can". His call will no doubt be heeded by the colourful crowd of leading financiers and international jet-setters who were present — and who, like Tang and many of his waiters, were dressed in a traditional Chinese gown worn by men and women alike.

Didn't Tang think the entrance fee was a bit stiff? "This isn't an airport transit lounge for VIPs — we offer atmosphere and romance," he said. "And do you realise the amount of work that has gone into the building where you are now? We had to bury a whole ultra-modern electric system, build a special water tank to conform with fire regulations, and restore all the pavilions."

HE HAS clearly opted for a class act. To judge by the elegance of the premises, it is easy to believe him when he claims his team of designers spent months studying ancient techniques used in the manufacture of tiles, painting and the carving of beams. The low lighting and rows of books in Chinese give the place the feel of a learned society.

But Tang had to get rid of the allegorical painting in the reading room bar, which illustrated one of Deng's celebrated maxims: "It matters little whether the cat is black or white as long as it catches mice." Why? "Because, quite frankly, it was very ugly."

But how was it that no representative of China's new business community — or, for that matter, of its officially Communist ruling class — was present at the opening? Tang sidestepped the question: "It's not the big fish that bring in the money."

The fact is that several affluent Chinese businessmen are currently in trouble with the police and tax authorities. Few of them would wish to be seen flaunting their wealth in a place like the China Club Beijing at a time when hundreds of state-owned factories have stopped paying their workforce because they have run out of cash.

But that does not mean the "big fish" will not patronise China Club Beijing one day. For the time being they just prefer to wait until the publicity campaign is over and the door is closed to reporters — in their professional capacity at least.

(November 7)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

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Mars Probe Splashes Into Pacific

David Hoffman and Peter Baker

A RUSSIAN Mars-bound spacecraft that failed to break out of Earth orbit shortly after launch reentered the atmosphere over the Pacific Ocean on Sunday night and tumbled harmlessly into the sea 1,800 miles off the coast of Chile, U.S. officials said.

Earlier, Russian and U.S. space experts had predicted that the six-ton spacecraft's degrading trajectory would probably send it back to Earth on a path that could scatter debris over northern Australia.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard went on television with a warning about the impending reentry and to appeal for calm. Although experts said most of the craft would probably burn up in the atmosphere, U.S. officials noted at the time that two 500-pound Mars-landing vehicles aboard were dense enough to survive reentry and strike the Earth's surface.

In addition, space officials said, the craft was fitted with four small batteries containing a total of 200 grams of plutonium — in the form of pellets — that would likely survive reentry, posing what they called a remote risk of radioactive contamination. In fact, the vehicle reentered the atmosphere in the broad vast reaches of the Pacific, far from any human habitation. "There's no way for us to tell whether anything survived reentry," said Navy Cmdr. David Knox, a spokesman for the U.S. Space Command in Honolulu.

The $64 million Mars probe carried experiments on behalf of Russia and 21 other countries that were intended to study the surface, atmosphere and magnetic fields of the plane. The first three stages of the rocket worked properly, but an engine that was supposed to boost the probe out of Earth's orbit and toward Mars apparently failed to fire.

Vladimir Molodtsov, the mission's deputy director, said that ground control stations lost touch with the craft as it entered a "shadow zone" out of radio contact. Contact was reestablished 12 minutes later than planned, he told the Interfax news agency, but was retained for just three minutes. Interfax quoted Russian space experts as saying they believe the booster rocket failed to switch on while it was in the "shadow" zone.

Vladimir Ananyev, a spokesman for the space agency, declined to categorize the failure as a catastrophe for the Russian space program. But others suggested the craft's failure was a major blow to Russia's space program. "What's happening now is a combination of bad luck and complete carelessness and mismanagement of the space program in Russia," said Roald Sagdeev, a University of Maryland professor who once played a prominent role in the Soviet space program.



Rocket to nowhere . . . Mars '96 takes off from Kazakhstan

Mexico Scuttles Political Reforms

John Ward Anderson in Mexico City

MEXICO'S ruling party last week scuttled a carefully crafted package of political reforms that were to be a hallmark of President Ernesto Zedillo's administration and move the country toward clean, uncontested elections.

The revolt by stalwarts of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, came five days after the long-ruling group lost ground in municipal elections in three states. It reflected concern that the poor showing in recent local voting could foreshadow more reversals at the polls that would cause the PRI to lose its dominant majority in Congress next year.

The open revolt against Zedillo's reforms by members of his own party — the latest in a series of moves by Mexico backing away from liberalization proposals — was a stinging rebuke to the president, who had made political and electoral reform a keystone of his 1994 election campaign. The action helped mark 1996 as a year of backtracking for Mexico and further illustrates the deep divide between the PRI's two wings — the reform-minded technocrats represented by Zedillo, and the politically entrenched, authoritarian old-timers, known here as the "dinosaurs."

Last month, Zedillo was forced to retreat on promises to privatize parts of Pemex, the state oil monopoly. And at his party's convention in September, opponents of change approved new rules for selecting presidential candidates that analysts say will bar liberal-minded bureaucrats who have never held elected office, such as Zedillo and his two predecessors as president, from rising to power.

The reforms, designed to limit official spending on campaigns and give opposition parties equal access to the media, had been the subject of two years of painstaking negotiations among Mexico's leading political parties. A bill proposed by Zedillo containing many of the reforms was on the verge of being approved by Congress last week with near-unanimous support.

But after the PRI suffered serious setbacks in the municipal elections on November 10, PRI Congressmen used their legislative majority to ram through 16 amendments that opposition politicians say eviscerated the bill. The vote was along strict party lines, with all but one PRI lawmaker voting in favor of the amended bill and the entire opposition voting against it.

"It seems that we're not going to have serious reforms, and that's very sad," said Sergio Aguayo, head of the Civic Alliance, a nationwide good-government and pro-democracy group. "What's left without fair elections to solve political differences? Nothing.

"It will not surprise me if next week there's another action by the EPR," he added, referring to a guerrilla group trying to overthrow the government, "claiming that there is no option left but armed struggle. And they have a point."

Foreign investors and independent financial analysts had encouraged Mexico to adopt significant political reforms, seeing them as part of the country's long-term political and economic stability. While analysts sounded a note of disappointment, they said they were not surprised by the party's reneging on the reforms.

"I'm rarely surprised by the political news from Mexico these days," said Ernest W. Brown, an analyst for Morgan Stanley & Co. in New York who added that the decision reflected the bumpy path of any serious reform program.

Political analysts said that the PRI lawmakers, who have often promised political reforms but rarely delivered them, watered down Zedillo's proposals because of the drubbing their party took in local elections in the states of Mexico, Hidalgo and Coahuila. Many were apparently worried that voter anger about the economy combined with liberalized election rules might cause the PRI to lose its legislative majority in critical midterm elections scheduled for next July.

The PRI has controlled the federal government for 67 years — currently the longest uninterrupted reign of any governing party in the world — often by employing tactics the reforms were designed to curtail.

Zairian Soldiers Terrorize River City

Lynne Duke in Kisangani

ON THE banks of the Zaire River, in the middle of the equatorial rain forest, this river port city has become a hothouse where Zaire's deepening chaos breeds.

The war on Zaire's eastern front is some 350 miles away, but its effects have rumbled west through the jungle along with throngs of retreating Zairian soldiers turned surly and destructive after their rout by rebel forces. Soldiers have pillaged villages and parts of this city of 500,000, they have tried to hijack airplanes at the airport, and they have continued the kind of soldiering for which Zairian troops are infamous: terrorizing and robbing anyone in their path.

The westward retreat of Zairian forces has sent wave after wave of Zairian villagers fleeing into the city and the surrounding rainforest, creating a humanitarian crisis that is separate from that of the 1.1 million Rwandan refugees camped along Zaire's eastern border. Aid workers here in Kisangani say thousands of Zairians are hiding in the dense jungle, living on whatever plants and animals they can find, for fear of the marauding troops who have clamped a reign of terror in the region.

Instead of being a force for order, the army is force of destabilization and lawlessness, many observers say. Even before their defeat in the east at the hand of Zairian rebels aligned with Rwanda's Tutsi-dominated government, Zairian troops were an ill-disciplined force.

Here as elsewhere in the nation, it is not clear who is in control. There is a governor, as well as a military commander, but no one can manage the troops. Those in control are those with guns, and last week they made their presence felt with continuous bursts of gunfire. The main hotel, called the Palm Beach, is guarded by troops with machine guns mounted on tripods, but even that did not prevent gunfire that forced guests to take cover. A group of foreign journalists, including one who was beaten and threatened with death if he did not pay a ransom, were forced to flee to the airport in an armed convoy.

A Catholic priest operating a church clinic had to get on a loudspeaker to hail help as he was nearly overrun by looting troops. In a heroic show of local fortitude, thousands of residents converged on the clinic to protect the priest. The looting was prevented.

The soldiers have even have terrorized their own. Firefights between elite commandos and regular troops ripped the humid hush in this graceful but decayed riverside city 750 miles northeast of Kinshasa, the capital. Soldiers from the east began arriving here in search of food for themselves and their families as well as a vent for their frustration.

Kisangani already had severe troubles. Adult malnutrition is high here, owing to poor agricultural production and the decline in commerce that was a result of the last pillage, in 1993, when troops rampaged in cities across the nation because of poor military conditions. The arrival of the retreating soldiers two weeks ago amounted to a small-scale repetition of that plunder.

Some local businessmen and relief groups here are attempting to organize a road convoy that would, in effect, help pacify the marauding soldiers by providing them with gasoline and food for their families. The theory is that such assistance would remove the soldiers' urge to loot and thus open the way for truly humanitarian convoys.

The road from Kisangani is the main artery linking the central rain forest region with the east, where both displaced Zairians as well as the Rwandan refugees are on the move. But that road is now a no man's land, a road of warriors, where only the well-armed dare tread, or the helpless.

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In the Shadows of the Cold War

OBITUARY
Alger Hiss

ALGER HISS, 92, the former State Department official whose 1950 perjury conviction for lying to a grand jury about communist espionage activity became one of the most celebrated and dramatic spy cases of this century, died last week at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York. He had emphysema.

Hiss, who served three years and eight months in prison after exhausting his appeals, insisted until his death that he was innocent, and his case stirred passion and controversy that continued for more than four decades.

It propelled Richard M. Nixon into national prominence when Nixon, as a young Republican congressman from California, orchestrated the House Un-American Activities Committee investigation into charges by Whittaker Chambers, a writer for Time magazine, that Hiss had passed copies of stolen State Department documents to him as part of a communist espionage operation during the 1930s.

Hiss was first named in public as a communist spy in 1948. At age 43, he had left the State Department and had recently been appointed president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, one of the country's most prestigious, private foreign policy organizations.

Chambers told a hearing of the House Un-American Activities Committee on August 3 that he had been a courier of copies of stolen government documents in a communist espionage operation during the 1930s and that Hiss had been one of his suppliers. The next day, Hiss wired the chairman of the committee demanding a chance to deny Chambers's charges in public and under oath. On August 5, 1948, he testified that he had never been a communist, never participated in espionage and never knew anyone named Whittaker Chambers.

Born in Baltimore on November 11, 1904, Hiss was the fourth of five children. When Hiss was 2½ years old, his father, who was then out of work, killed himself by cutting his throat with a razor blade. With help from relatives, his mother managed to keep the family together and raise her children. Hiss graduated from John Hopkins University and Harvard University law school.

Hiss practiced law in Boston and later New York, then came to Washington in 1933 to join the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. Abe Fortas, later a Supreme Court justice, and Adlai Stevenson, twice a Democratic candidate for president, were among his colleagues in the agency.

In 1934, Hiss transferred to the legal staff of the Nye Committee, which was investigating the impact of the munitions industry on U.S. policy during and after World War I. From there, he went to the office of Solicitor General Stanley F. Reed, who later would serve on the Supreme Court, and in 1936, Assistant Secretary Francis B. Sayre invited him to join the State Department, where he remained until 1947.

He seemed convincing when he told the Un-American Activities Committee in 1948 that he had never been a communist spy nor known anyone named Whittaker Chambers. Several members of the committee feared they had blundered seriously by permitting Chambers to testify in public without checking his story, and they were ready to drop the case.

But Nixon reasoned that although the committee might never be able to establish whether Hiss had been a communist or a spy, it should be able to determine whether he had known Chambers. If Hiss was lying about the one, he was probably lying about the other, Nixon said, and persuaded the committee to name him chairman of a subcommittee to continue the investigation.

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Bart Barnes

Alger Hiss, lawyer, born November 11, 1904; died November 15 1996

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GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 24 1996

Cables Shed New Light on Holocaust

Michael Dobbs

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Emerging Companies	+708.2	1 out of 31	+117.6	AAA
American Growth	+1130.9	1 out of 13	+120.7	AAA
Far Eastern Growth	+431.4	1 out of 14	+123.3	AAA
Japanese Growth	+12.3	13 out of 81		AA
European Growth	+178.2	4 out of 6	+80.4	
UK Growth	+335.9	1 out of 26	+107.6	AAA
Asian Smaller Markets	+81.9	12 out of 90		AAA
Latin American Growth	+18.7	18 out of 25		
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GUARDIAN WEEKLY
November 24 1996

In the Shadows of the Cold War

OBITUARY
Alger Hiss

ALGER HISS, 92, the former State Department official whose 1950 perjury conviction for lying to a grand jury about communist espionage activity became one of the most celebrated and dramatic spy cases of this century, died last week at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York. He had emphysema.

Hiss, who served three years and eight months in prison after exhausting his appeals, insisted until his death that he was innocent, and his case stirred passion and controversy that continued for more than four decades.

It propelled Richard M. Nixon into national prominence when Nixon, as a young Republican congressman from California, orchestrated the House Un-American Activities Committee investigation into charges by Whittaker Chambers, a writer for Time magazine, that Hiss had passed copies of stolen State Department documents to him as part of a communist espionage operation during the 1930s.

Hiss was first named in public as a communist spy in 1948. At age 43, he had left the State Department and had recently been appointed president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, one of the country's most prestigious, private foreign policy organizations.

Chambers told a hearing of the House Un-American Activities Committee on August 3 that he had been a courier of copies of stolen government documents in a communist espionage operation during the 1930s and that Hiss had been one of his suppliers. The next day, Hiss wired the chairman of the committee demanding a chance to deny Chambers's charges in public and under oath. On August 5, 1948, he testified that he had never been a communist, never participated in espionage and never knew anyone named Whittaker Chambers.

Born in Baltimore on November 11, 1904, Hiss was the fourth of five children. When Hiss was 2½ years old, his father, who was then out of work, killed himself by cutting his throat with a razor blade. With help from relatives, his mother managed to keep the family together and raise her children. Hiss graduated from John Hopkins University and Harvard University law school.

Hiss practiced law in Boston and later New York, then came to Washington in 1933 to join the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. Abe Fortas, later a Supreme Court justice, and Adlai Stevenson, twice a Democratic candidate for president, were among his colleagues in the agency.

In 1934, Hiss transferred to the legal staff of the Nye Committee, which was investigating the impact of the munitions industry on U.S. policy during and after World War I. From there, he went to the office of Solicitor General Stanley F. Reed, who later would serve on the Supreme Court, and in 1936, Assistant Secretary Francis B. Sayre invited him to join the State Department, where he remained until 1947.

He seemed convincing when he told the Un-American Activities Committee in 1948 that he had never been a communist spy nor known anyone named Whittaker Chambers. Several members of the committee feared they had blundered seriously by permitting Chambers to testify in public without checking his story, and they were ready to drop the case.

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The report from Bach-Zelewski is just one of hundreds of intercepted German cables recently declassified by the U.S. National Security Agency and now available in the reading room of the National Archives.

The intercepts, which were part of the top secret British code-breaking operation known as Ultra intercepts, also shed new light on the controversial question of what Western governments knew about the Holocaust. Some Holocaust researchers have accused Britain and the United States of withholding information about the mass killings of Jews until the discovery of the concentration camps at the end of the war.

The release of previously secret German reports on the early stages of the Holocaust follows the Russian decision last month to turn over 15,000 pages of documents covering the same period to the United States Holocaust Museum. The Russian documents are now being sorted and catalogued.

While considerable attention has been paid to certain Nazi atrocities in the Soviet Union, such as the execution of 32,771 Jews in the Ukrainian village of Babi Yar in October 1941, this stage of the Holocaust is not nearly as well documented as the death camps of Buchenwald and Auschwitz, which began operating in 1942.

"The Holocaust began on Soviet soil," said Wesley Fisher, deputy director of research at the Holocaust Museum. "Up to now, however, this has been the unknown face of the Holocaust. The Germans did not keep records of everybody they were killing."

The newly released documents bolster the view that the Holocaust really got underway with Hitler's invasion of Russia on June 22, 1941. During the course of the next few months, hundreds of thousands of Jews were systematically executed by German units in large-scale mopping-up operations.

The documents also shatter the notion that it was only SS police units, the so-called "Einsatzgruppen," that were committing the atrocities. The new evidence shows that a key role in the extermination of Jews was carried out by the Order Police, municipal units whose activities have attracted relatively little attention from historians.

Despite the documentary evidence that massacres of Jews were being carried out on Soviet territory, Western governments were reluctant to publicize the atrocities.

Senior officials in Britain and the United States were skeptical about reports from agents that the Nazis had embarked on a "final solution" of the "Jewish problem." As late as September 1944, a British diplomat argued against publicizing the atrocity stories on the grounds that it would compel officials to "waste a disproportionate amount of their time dealing with wailing Jews."

"There may have been some anti-Semitism [in the West], but this was not the decisive factor," said Walter Laqueur, author of The Terrible Secret, one of the standard works on Western knowledge of the Holocaust.

"You needed a certain imagination to understand what was going on. The people who were analyzing intelligence reports were narrow-minded. They did not have the perspective that we have now. They wanted to know where a certain brigade was and were not so much interested in reports of atrocities."

It is unclear when the British made their material available to the Americans. The intercepts, which are stamped "Most Secret. To Be Kept Under Lock and Key: Never to Be Removed From the Office," have not been declassified in England.

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The American Way

Jonathan Yardley

U.S.A.: The 42nd Parallel; 1919; The Big Money
By John Dos Passos
Library of America. 1,288pp. $40

THAT John Dos Passos's massive U.S.A. trilogy belongs in the Library of America — that it is a classic of American literature — is, or should be, beyond argument. The three novels gathered within it — The 42nd Parallel, 1919 and The Big Money — are, taken as a whole, the most ambitious attempt by any American writer of fiction to contain this vast, heterogeneous and elusive nation within a single volume. Though published six decades ago, the trilogy is no period piece. Some of its language and many of its references are dated, but its group portrait of the American people retains its fundamental accuracy and force.

Yet for all of that, U.S.A. is a problematical book. It is a pity that this new edition comes without an introduction, for it would be interesting to know the grounds on which it was selected for inclusion in what seems to have become, if only by default, our literary equivalent of the Baseball Hall of Fame. U.S.A. is important, no doubt about that, but it is also peculiar. In part this arises from its sheer uniqueness; we have no other book quite like it, though this is not for lack of imitators, Dos Passos himself among them. In larger part, though, it arises from the book's severe deficiencies as a work of fiction; U.S.A. is a splendid piece of reportage, but it isn't much of a novel.

It would be surprising if many American readers under the age of 50 know either the book or its author, but in his day Dos Passos was celebrated and his work was revered. He never achieved quite the reputation enjoyed by his more famous contemporaries Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway, but for a long time he didn't fall short of them by much. Four decades ago, as I was making the passage from high school to college, Dos Passos was widely taught and, more important, read for pleasure by ordinary readers. U.S.A. was among the most important books of my youth, and my affection for it is not diminished by a more clinical re-reading.

The three novels of the trilogy were published in 1930, 1932 and 1936. They portray America before, during and after the First World War, and are centrally preoccupied with the question that interested Dos Passos more than any other, the relationship between capital and labor. When the first volume was published Dos Passos was still under the spell of communism to which so many of the intelligentsia of his day succumbed, but by the time the third appeared he had begun the rightward swing that in time would land him in the pages of the National Review and in the Goldwater cheering section.

This turns out to be less important than many readers thought for many years. Read in the cool light of the 1990s, U.S.A. turns out to be far less political than sociological. Today's reader will stumble over a certain amount of tired rhetoric ("It's the fault of the system that don't give a man the fruit of his labor") and will wince at the oversimplified depiction of downtrodden but noble working folk, but Dos Passos's complaints about economic and political injustice carry less weight in the book than his portraits of the people affected by it.

Few of these people are especially memorable; even at the thousand-page mark I had some difficulty distinguishing Eleanor Stoddard from Eveline Hutchins, and only the public-relations genius J. Ward Moorehouse sticks clearly in the mind after all those pages have been weathered. Not merely that, but all of these people suffer remarkably similarly at the hands of fortune; their love lives are unhappy, their working lives are dull, and their penchant for soaking their troubles in oceans of hard liquor is as exhausting for the reader as for them. No shortcoming of the trilogy is more serious than Dos Passos's failure to make real people out of all these characters.



John Dos Passos: revered and celebrated PHOTOGRAPH JOE HEIBERGER

Yet if he doesn't bring them to life, he understands their problems and their surroundings. Unlike most American novelists, Dos Passos was interested in people in their jobs. U.S.A. is full of work, most of it hard and unrewarding, but work such as real people do in real life. The nitty-gritty of the country is present on every page of this book:

"She couldn't sleep. She lay in her sagging bed listening to the voices of the boarders rocking on the porch below and to the hooting of engines and the clank of shunted freightcars down in the valley, seeing again the shapeless broken shoes and the worn hands folded over dirty aprons and the sharp anxious beadiness of women's eyes, feeling the quake underfoot of the crazy stairways zigzagging up and down the hills black and bare as slagpiles where the steelworkers lived in jumbled shanties and big black rows of smoke-gnawed clapboarded houses, in her nose the stench of cranky backhouses and kitchens with cabbage cooking and clothes boiling and unwashed children and drying diapers."

No American work of fiction, The Adventures Of Augie March possibly excepted, packs so much of America itself within its pages. Dos Passos went everywhere, saw everything, and wrote it all down. The book has strong autobiographical impulses but even stronger powers of clinical observation. The celebrated "Newsreels," in which Dos Passos employed headlines, extracts from news accounts and snatches from popular songs as counterpoint to his fictional narrative, attest to his all-seeing and selective eye, as do the equally celebrated brief portraits of famous people of the day.

That all but one of these portraits are of men and that all those portrayed are white is testimony to changed times. The few blacks in the book occupy servile positions and lamentable racial slurs get a fairly vigorous workout. This is unfortunate, but Dos Passos was as much a child of his era as we are of our own. His heart went out to the working poor, and were he writing U.S.A. in 1996, we can be certain that his portrait of them would be in some important respects quite different.

Times and conditions may change, but people don't; the American struggles that Dos Passos described in the 1930s are still going on in the 1990s. Indeed much of the world that now seems old and familiar to us was just taking shape as Dos Passos wrote these three books, and it is fascinating to see it emerge in these pages. Advertising, public relations, the movies, easy credit, playing the market: All of this and much else that we now take for granted was new and exciting then, but Dos Passos's critique of all of it is as pungent today as it was then.

Dos Passos was neither an original writer nor an especially graceful one. Like many others of his day he fell under the influence of James Joyce as well as that of his schoolmate and friend, e.e. cummings; he liked to run words together and to make prose look like poetry, but the machinations behind these devices are almost always visible. He was best when he wrote plainly, about the dreams and disappointments of plain people. No American writer ever cared more deeply about them or wrote about them more honestly.

Whispers in the Darkness of the Night

Michael Dirda

READER'S BLOCK
By David Markson
Dalkey Archive. 193pp.
Paperback, $12.95

SOMETIMES you circle an author for years, slowly drawing closer and closer, waiting for the right book. Over the past two decades or so I kept reading wonderful things about David Markson's fiction. In 1988 Colin Walters, the urbane book editor at the Washington Times, even chose Markson's Wittgenstein's Mistress as his favorite book of the year. Told from the viewpoint of a woman who believes herself the last person alive on earth, the novel registers, in sentences, second thoughts and sighs, its heroine's attempt to describe the world as she finds it. The result is a haunting portrait of a mind at the end of its tether. It should have won prizes.

David Markson, now approaching 70, has obviously never been a writer content to repeat himself — or copy anyone else. But in Reader's Block he has actually come close to creating that ultimate novel dreamed of by the critic Walter Benjamin: one consisting entirely of quotations. Markson imagines that a character called Reader is trying to draft a narrative about a Protagonist who is living either in a cemetery or on a beach. This tiny novelistic plot is then bejeweled with a series of literary anecdotes and lugubrious factoids, random lists and sorrowful observations that build up, through verbal pointillism, a picture of the artist's vocation as one of madness, deprivation and early death. Since Markson requires the reader (lower case r) to pick up on all sorts of literary arcana, each page of this "novel of intellectual reference and allusion . . . minus the novel" offers a chance to test the breadth and depth of one's own reading. For many, the result will be quite unputdownable.

In what other book would one learn that "George Gissing's first wife became a prostitute. His second wife went mad" or that "The eulogy at Puccini's funeral was delivered by Benito Mussolini" or that "T.S. Eliot and William Burroughs's mother walked to dancing class together as children in St. Louis. Along the way passing Prufrock's Furniture Store" or that "Jackson Pollock once held a job cleaning bird droppings from statues in New York parks"? Alongside such pungent trivia, Markson inserts unattributed quotations, lists (Byron's mistresses, opera singers whose initials are ES), Latin tags, and Reader's changing thoughts about his Protagonist. In these latter instances the reader's pleasure is often that of self-satisfaction, of sharing in Markson's culture, of knowing, for instance, that Skeres, Poley and Frizer were the men who murdered Christopher Marlowe, and that it was Paul Valery who claimed "one does not finish a poem, one only abandons it."

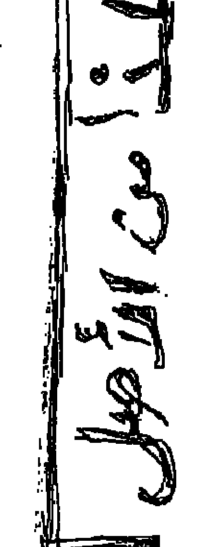
OBVIOUSLY not everyone will respond to this "distant cousin innumerable times removed of The Unquiet Grave." Like Cyril Connolly's wistful classic, Markson's quotations sound a mournful taps for bookishness and deep learning: In Connolly's words, "It is closing-time in the gardens of the west." Still even those with only a mild literary bent will find much to enjoy in Markson's humor and provocations. "Can Protagonist think of a single film that interests him as much as the three hundredth best book he ever read?" "John D. MacDonald is by any standards a better writer than Saul Bellow." Certain obsessive themes also emerge: famous writers who were anti-Semites; the sorrows of art-rejection, sickness, lost manuscripts, neglect, madness; roll calls of musicians and opera singers; the names of artists who committed suicide.

In fact, Reader's Block gradually emerges as a kind of suicide note, a mournful litany proffering a cold and melancholy comfort. No intellectual despair is unique, the book seems to say; reflect on the suffering, despondency and madness of those who were truly great. In his last entries, Reader imagines Protagonist as either drowning himself in the sea or turning on the gas in his little house by the cemetery. "In the end one experiences only oneself. Said Nietzsche."

Though death pervades Reader's Block, it never overwhelms the book's stoic and rueful gaiety (as Gilbert Sorrentino dubs it). Or the soul-satisfying pleasure of testing one's own literary connoisseurship. In these 200 pages the widely read will pick up on the opening sentences of Juan Rulfo's Pedro Paramo, Frazer's Golden Bough, Chekhov's The Seagull and Sabatini's Scaramouche; there are unattributed quotes from Beckett, Gertrude Stein, Flaubert, Valery, Dowson, Alexander Theroux, Melville, Paul Celan, Malory, a couple of Roman emperors, Goethe, Shakespeare scholar L.C. Knights, and Wyndham Lewis ("He doesn't come in here disguised like Westminster Abbey" — the blind and housebound Lewis on his old friend T.S. Eliot). At one point Markson even drops in the last sentence of Wittgenstein's Mistress — in French: *Quelqu'un vit sur cette plage* — "Someone is living on this beach."

Yet bookish expertise may also run from reader to Writer. Markson misspells Pausanias and gets the gender wrong of Valery's Marquise who goes out at 4. Flaubert and Baudelaire's most famous books weren't prosecuted in the same year but in successive ones (1856 and 1857 respectively); 89045neither did Samuel Johnson assert that no man ever wished Robinson Crusoe longer; he said this about Paradise Lost. Jacqueline du Pre played two Stradivarius cellos, not one; her favorite went to Rostropovich, the other to Yo-Yo Ma. Picky, picky: For where, of course, does erudition leave off and mere pedantry and one-upmanship begin? What really matters is that David Markson's "seminonfictional semifiction" is exhilarating, sorrowful and amazing. Indeed, a minor masterpiece.

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Food grown for the white man's table

Third World farmers are sacrificing local needs to reap maximum profits from produce destined for foreign markets, writes **Paul Brown**

LOOK AT the label of those delicious little mange-tout peas in the supermarket. Where do they come from? Probably not France. More likely Kenya, Zaire or Mozambique, flown in fresh for the convenience for the British consumer.

Meanwhile the malnourished poor in those countries — which used to be able to grow enough food for their populations —are relying heavily on cheap grain imports from North America for their survival.

Cheap grain aid distorts local markets. In India, Mari Marcel Thekaekara, a worker for Accord, which encourages self-help, describes a "deep burning anger" caused by aid which undercuts the price of local foods and cripples their efforts.

Writing in the New Internationalist, she says: "Under the new economic regime, we are encouraged to produce cash crops. Special subsidies and soft loans — aid by another name — are being floated to encourage change. So the Thanjuvar rice belt is being transformed into a giant prawn pond to export shrimps to Japan. In the Nilgiris, people are being exhorted to change from food crops to flowers for export. Farmers grow orchids while vegetables rot in the fields because farmers cannot even get back the picking price. As a result, food production has dropped alarmingly in these areas."

In the name of free trade and to make money to pay off national debts or for "development", food is no longer something grown locally to be eaten locally. It is a cash crop for consumers in a rich foreign country. Farm land anywhere is now a resource to be used by the industrialised world. Much of the most productive land in Africa and other poorer regions is now turned over to growing cocoa, coffee, tea and cut flowers for Western markets. The old subsistence crops have been swept away to more marginal lands, where farming is more difficult because all available water for irrigation is poured into keeping up the quality of the cash crops.

Barry Coates, director of the World Development Movement, believes that the dominance of the idea of free trade masks what is really happening. Food control through multinational companies means that world prices are fixed and the poorest countries are made vulnerable. He points to Cargill Incorporated, the US giant that controls much of the world seed and grain trade; it has 140 affiliates, 800 plants and 300 offices in 60 countries; its sales of $23 billion make its income equal to the nine sub-Saharan African countries.

He says: "It is disgraceful that the interests of a handful of greedy multinationals have been put before the needs of the world's hungry."



Growing pains . . . Much of the most productive land in Africa is now turned over to growing cash crops for export PHOTO: JOE ALEXANDER

The free marketeers argue that with markets that operate properly the world food surplus would be translated into reasonable rations for all. Aid and development agencies say that is bunk — and anyway the arguments about who controls food distribution and exploitation may be overtaken by events. The Worldwatch Institute points out that there are 90 million extra mouths to feed each year, and a growing demand for grain from China and the "tiger" economies of southeast Asia.

Take just one ancient source of food. Worldwatch president Lester Brown says that from 1950 to 1990 world fish catches increased dramatically, but since then have remained static, because the 17 major world fisheries are at maximum capacity and some have been overfished. Catches have declined 9 per cent since 1990, and fish is more expensive than meat in many countries. Western purchasing power and catching technology are depriving poorer countries of their most important source of protein.

The world's grain harvest increased from 631 million tonnes in 1950 to 1,780 million tonnes in 1990, a gain of 182 per cent, or 3 per cent a year. But since 1990 it has only risen by a total of 3 per cent. Because of world population growth in the same period, the grain harvest per head has effectively fallen by 6 per cent. Much of the big increase came from irrigation and over-use of fertiliser. So the future does not look good. Aquifer depletion, diversion of irrigation water to cities, and the waterlogging and salting of irrigation systems has reduced the land available for growing crops.

Brown adds that China's 1.2 billion people are getting more affluent and demanding more meat, eggs and beer in their diet: anything multiplied by 1.2 billion is a lot of consumption — all these new additions to diet consume grain. When China buys all the surplus grain at world market prices then the poor elsewhere will starve.

The British government believes free trade and environmental protection are compatible, but it does state: "The conditions of international trade should not encourage producers and investors to ignore legitimate local environmental concerns."

Professor David Hall, a plant biologist from King's College, London, says there are scientists who believe it possible to feed 8 billion people; if grain were used to feed chicken rather than beef it would free millions of acres of land to grow more grain — and technology to improve grain harvests 30-fold already exists. All we need are the correct political and economic policies.



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Besides its emergency assistance, IRWW endeavours to establish a long term programme of support for the needy to rebuild their shattered lives through development programmes of Vocational Training, Economic Development, Health, Education Water & Sanitation.

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Help Worldwide
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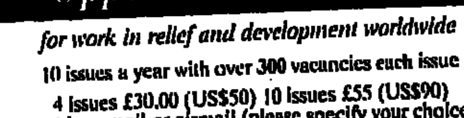
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Humanitarian Relief Staff

Oxfam is currently seeking experienced humanitarian relief staff for work in Central Africa (Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania), Liberia, Sudan, Ingushetia and the Republic of Srpska. Interested candidates should have previous emergency field experience and relevant language skills: French for Central Africa. Existing knowledge of the region of interest would be an advantage.
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If you would like to apply for any of the above posts please send a full CV and covering letter to:

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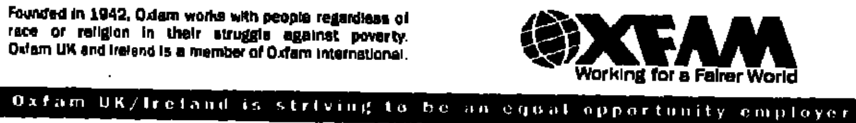
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James Davidson, Personnel Manager,
Children's Aid Direct, 82 Caversham Road,
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For a full job description and application form, contact Nicholas Richards, CAFOD, Romero Close, Stockwell Road, London SW9 9TY
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More recently, MSAVLC has provided for the surgical repair of hare lip and cleft palate among children in Thanh Hoa Province, the provision of lens implants for patients with cataract at Ky Anh, and plans are proceeding for a second Artificial Limb Centre to be opened shortly. Support for the British Friendship Hospital continues while the main purpose of MSAVLC is to enable doctors and other health workers in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to carry out their work with emphasis on primary health care. To this end, a Primary Health Clinic in the mountainous province of Lai Chau was equipped in 1994 and we are supporting a primary health programme in Takeo Province, Cambodia, and shall be helping to equip a Primary Health Clinic in Laos which is being built

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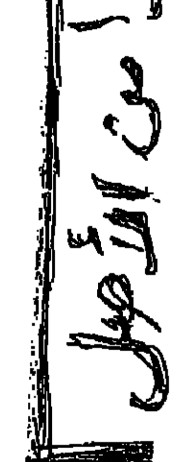
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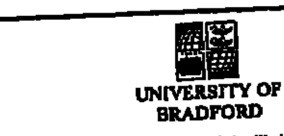
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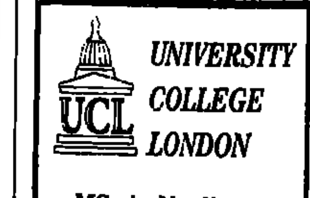
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The mid-air plane collision in India has highlighted the lot of air traffic controllers. Report by **Gary Younge**

Just a blip away from disaster



Keeping an eye on the sky . . . an air traffic controller at Heathrow airport PHOTO MARTIN GODWIN

AIR TRAFFIC controllers like to compare themselves to futures dealers. Guiding up to a dozen planes to land safely at any one time, they sit in front of computer screens, fuelled by fast food, making snap decisions that affect the lives of millions of people around the world. Their skill is to predict what will happen, avoid potential calamities and exploit possible opportunities while trying to keep their heads, their hair and a modicum of poise.

But in aviation, as in finance, for all the reliable workers beavering away there will always be a rogue trader who takes on too much, is in too deep and refuses to pull the emergency cord until it is too late, so bringing the whole house crashing down.

Like the controller who got so frustrated by the number of blips on his screen, representing planes waiting to land, that he took his cursor and started eliminating them one by one. Or the woman in Arizona who put an American West 737 and US Air Force fighter on a collision course as they closed in at 800mph, then froze when she realised what she had done. A crash was averted only when her supervisor stepped in and the fighter pilot was ordered to change course.

Or the man in Newark, New Jersey, ushering in 10 jets at the same time, who lost his electronic frequency at a crucial moment and watched in horror as all the planes strayed dangerously off course. As the fate of thousands of passengers slipped from his hands, he let out a primal scream and ended his working day as a half-naked wreck on the floor of the control room.

All these controllers were discharged on medical leave and in each case, miraculously, nobody was hurt. But these incidents provide a cautionary tale for the anxious air passenger: when it comes to flying, ignorance is bliss.

Flying, as any press officer in the aviation industry will tell you, is the safest form of transport. At present, the chances of your plane crashing is little more than three in a million. But while the statistics back up this argument convincingly, the headlines do not. After a period of relatively infrequent air disasters the number of incidents in the past year has leapt dramatically.

Pilots insist that flying is still less dangerous than driving. As one US pilot says: "My insurance company is more bothered about whether I smoke than the fact that I fly. When I'm flying I know that everybody else in the air has a certain level of expertise and a licence. You don't know what you're dealing with on the road."

But even as the captain of the aircraft is offering you reassuring words about the local weather conditions, there is a world of information going into his headset that you would not only not understand but probably wouldn't want to know about if you did.

To imagine an air traffic controller's job you must first picture the sky divided up into separate control zones, then further subdivided by separate layers determined by altitude. Each plane is represented by small blips and numbers which indicate the type of plane, its speed, altitude and destination.

The controller must guide the planes in his or her control area — sometimes several at a time — into the airport while ensuring that they remain a safe distance apart. Most of the time, the system functions without incident. But at peak times in busy airports, things can often descend into chaos.

For a stress-free journey, it is not advisable to dwell on just how chaotic those chaotic moments can be. That way you won't have to concern yourself that an air traffic controller might be, in air traffic control speak, "going down the pipes" — lapsing in concentration and losing track of what is happening on the radar screen; or about to "eat a deal" — make a mistake which is reported to the Federal Aviation Authority.

"You've got to have two mentalities," one controller told the New York Times. "One: these aren't lives here; they are just dots. And two: even as bad as you can mess up, it's a big sky; the planes won't hit. Otherwise the stress is too much. You'd have to have a heart attack. You'd be done."

The trouble is that air traffic controllers' shifts have got far harder recently and promise to get even harder. Thanks to under-investment in technology, under-staffing and a massive increase in workload, the majority are performing in what amounts to sweatshop conditions.

The US is now using old computers with only 1 per cent of the capacity of the power of an ordinary desk-top PC. "We are using second world war radar screens and IBM computers from the 1960s," says US controller Teddi-Jann Casey.

Moreover it is not uncommon for radar screens to go completely blank for hours — even days — at a time and for the controllers to look out for air traffic by peering through binoculars. "We're depending on finding the planes right out of the window, which is kind of a crazy way to conduct business," says one controller in Florida, where the radar had not been fixed for two days.

Then there's congestion. Most forecasts suggest that air travel will grow by little more than 5 per cent a year in the foreseeable future. By 2010 the annual number of commercial airline departures will have grown from 14 million to 22 million.

This means more "stacks" or circling aircraft in the skies waiting to land and growing queues of planes on the ground waiting to take off. For airport controllers, more stacks means more blips on the screen, which means more stress. Their lives are further complicated by the number of fairly inexperienced pilots eager to practise in small aircraft.

FINALLY, there is the language problem. According to the international civil aviation organisation, even though the international language of aviators is English, a great deal of phraseology remains colloquial. One US pilot, who was second in the queue to touch down at Gatwick, received the instruction: "Pop over." The English controller meant that he should keep circling, but the pilot thought he was being told to leapfrog the first plane and land in front.

Add this problem to the effects of deregulation — which has helped spawn hundreds of new no-frills airlines using old planes and badly paid crews — and you have a rough idea of what may have happened above New Delhi last week. Indian aviation experts say that pilots from the former Soviet Union have always had problems understanding instructions in English and their cockpit equipment is metric.

None of this has been helped by the strong push towards deregulation and the Reagan decision to sack two-thirds of US air traffic controllers in the early eighties after they went on strike. Many US airports still have fewer fully trained staff than before the dispute even though the number of flights has increased by 200 per cent in some cases.

The British government plans to push ahead with privatisation of its air traffic control system which the unions claim will compromise safety.

Both the US and the UK are modernising their control equipment but even that is proving problematic. The US is planning to update its system with $1 billion-worth of new equipment over the next 10 years. It is also considering the introduction of a new "free flight" system, which would allow planes to fly directly from A to B without travelling on specific routes and using a global-positioning system for navigation. Some fear that this could make the skies a more dangerous place, rendering the air traffic controllers at best simply monitoring the traffic and at worst obsolete.

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The new Crusades

Paul Evans

IN DAYS of old when knights were bold they were sent away to the Crusades. Britain has a long and nasty tradition of waging holy war in various guises. Even beneath the surface of modern green awareness, another crusade is taking place almost unnoticed to protect the nature we like from the nature we don't.

In conservation, protecting native and rare species means that the alien and common must be culled. To some, this might sound like ecological cleansing, but to those at the sharp end such measures are justified by the fact that the problem was caused by humans in the first place. If it was our fault that things got out of whack, then it's our job to get it sorted out. If we believe we have an overriding moral obligation to protect rare native species, then we must do battle with the alien interlopers.

This is certainly true for Simon Lyster, director general of the Wildlife Trusts which manages 2,200 nature reserves in Britain. "What do you want us to do?" says Lyster. "You can't leave nature alone if you're trying to maintain the diversity of species, which we're trying to do. If we want to preserve our natives species it means we have to do some rather nasty things to other species."

These sentiments are echoed by Valerie Keeble of the People's Trust for Endangered Species, whose attitude to troublesome introduced species is that "we . . . sometimes we have to take some unpleasant steps in order to preserve our own indigenous species".

But is that as far as our ethical questioning should go, and should conservationists and their supporters be happy with this sort of reasoning? There are important and under-discussed questions here. When we think of our ethical relationships with other humans, we are automatically dealing at the level of the individual. Why is it that we treat other humans as individuals but in conservation we cannot regard members of species as individuals?

Philosopher Kate Rawls thinks it's shortsighted of conservationists to ignore the power that individual animals have to draw people in to broader conservation objectives. She says, "You often encounter the view that to be concerned about individual animals is somehow sentimental, emotional and unscientific. But it doesn't follow that all emotional responses to animals are out of order. When witnessing cruelty to animals, anger or distress may not only be appropriate emotions, but reasonable ones too.

"Ethics does not have to split reason and emotion. It has somehow become acceptable to be prejudiced against certain groups of animals because they are regarded as alien, introduced by humans or doing damage. I would argue that, as individuals, these creatures are owed the same sort or respect as any other sort of sentient creature."

Today's green puritans waging holy war against an increasingly cosmopolitan nature may be on a hiding to nothing. Not only are they, like King Canute, trying to hold back the tide, they also have an increasingly vocal and influential section of society up in arms about the culling of wild animals for conservation ends. Do the ends really justify the means? Can we apply different ethics to species or individuals? Underlying the new crusades is a fear of nature getting out of control and retaliating against human meddling. Those looking down their sights at wildlife targets fear to look behind them. Infidel Nature — it's coming.

Chess Leonard Barden

EVEN Anatoly Karpov, winner of a record 140 tournaments, can have off days, and the Fide world champion's 5½/11 at Tilburg last month was his worst result for a long time. He won just two games, though even the joint victors Gelfand and Piket could only notch three each in a draw-dominated tournament.

Karpov's one moment to savour came in the final round when he launched a novelty, originally prepared for Kamsky in their world title match, to dent 17-year-old Peter Leko's ambitions. The sharp 7 . . . a6 in the Grunfeld Defence is starting to look too slow when White counters actively in the centre and against the black king.

Karpov v Leko, Tilburg

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 Qb3 dxc4 6 Qxc4 0-0 7 e4 a6 8 e5 Nfd7 9 Be3 Nb6 10 Qc5! Be6 11 Ng5 Bf5 12 Be2 Kh8 13 g4 Bc8 14 0-0-0 f6 15 Nge4 f5 16 gxf5 Bxf5 17 h4 N8d7 18 Qa3 Nd5 19 Ng5 N7b6 20 h5 Nxe3 21 fxe3 Bh6 22 Nce4 Qd7 23 hxg6 Qc6+ 24 Kd2 Qxg6 25 Rdg1 Rad8 26 e6 Rxd4+ 27 exd4 Bxe4 28 Rxh6 Qxh6 29 Qe3 Resigns.

Except for Kasparov and Karpov at their best, the results of top chessplayers are becoming less consistent. Competition is fierce, while the unceasing round of élite tournaments and computer preparation saps the stamina and creativity of competing grandmasters. Gelfand, so solid at Tilburg, was crushed a few weeks earlier at a Euroclub Cup semi-final in one of the brilliancies of the year.

Gelfand v Kramnik

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 e6 5 e3 Nbd7 6 Qc2 Bd6 7 g4?! The controversial Shirov Gambit. **Bb4** Rather than go for the murky Nxg4 8 Rg1, Kramnik prefers to launch his own counterplay.

8 Bd2 Qe7 9 a3 Bxc3 10 Bxc3 b6 11 Bd3 Ba6 12 Qa4 dxc4 13 Qxa6 cxd3 14 Qxd3 0-0 15 g5 Nd5 16 Bd2 f5! Now if White castles short or keeps his K in the centre, Black infiltrates by Qf7-h5.

17 0-0-0 c5 18 Kb1 b5! The standard line-opener against a long castled king.

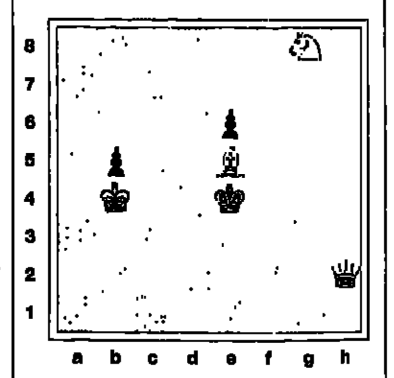
19 Qxb5 Rab8 20 Qa5 Rb3 21 Ka2 Rfb8 22 Rb1 e5! 23 Rhc1 Qe6 Threatening Nc3+.

24 Ka1 exd4 25 Rxc5 Nxc5 26 Qxc5. With his position deteriorating, Gelfand pins his hopes on this exchange sacrifice and his threat of 27 Nxd4 . . .

26 . . . Nc3! 27 Nxd4 Rxb2!. . . but he has set up Kramnik's final attack. If 28 Nxe6 Rxb1 or Ra2 mate. **28 Rxb2 Qa2+! 29 Resigns.**

● Looking for a chess club or one-day congress near you? The British Chess Federation (01424 442500) has details of all affiliated clubs, a congress calendar, and information about suppliers of chessbooks and computers. And if you have a talented son/daughter/pupil, enter him or her for next month's London junior congress (017076 59080) where Nigel Short first made his name.

No 2448



White mates in three moves, against any defence (by C Szabo, 1888).

No 2447: 1 Qg1 (threat 2 Qf1 and 3 d3), Bxg1 2 d3 and 3 b4. If Be3 2 dxe3 d3 3 e4. If Bg3 2 Qxd4+ Kxd4 3 Ne6.

Quick crossword no. 341

Across

5 Society of conjurors (5,6)
7 Unexpected problem (4)
8 Hidden (8)
9 Biscuit — firework (7)
11 Evil spirit (5)
13 Intended (5)
14 A non-Jew (7)
16 Found an opportunity (4,4)
17 Narrow-minded, smug person (4)
18 Opulent, pampered conditions (3,2,8)

Down

1 Very eager, impatient (4)
2 Child's toy — to score (anag) (7)
3 Earliest — initial (5)
4 Inform (8)
5 Insignificant point (5,6)
6 Rome (7,4)
10 Scorn (8)
12 Income (7)
15 Moment (5)
17 Stop up (4)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

THE 1996 Olympiad in Rhodes was a nerve-racking affair for the British players. A series of indifferent results against weaker teams left the British Open squad requiring a big win against Israel in the final round in order to qualify for the knock-out stages. The Israelis eventually triumphed by a 17-13 margin, which did neither team any good because the Russians were able to overhaul both of them with a maximum win, reaching the quarter-finals for the first time in their history.

It was almost the same story with the ladies' team, who needed three big wins on the final day of qualifying. This time, though, the British were equal to the task, beating each of their last three opponents 24-6 and progressing to the quarter-finals.

Beryl Kerr, who was making her debut for Britain at the Olympiad in Rhodes, brought off the most imaginative coup of the tournament on the deal shown (centre table). Study the hands for a while and see if you can find any way of making Beryl's contract of 6NT.

6NT is an excellent contract, but the vile distribution of the spade suit appears to leave declarer with no chance at all. Winning the opening heart lead in dummy, Beryl cashed the ace of spades on which West discarded a club. At this point most declarers would have given the hand up as hopeless, conceding a spade trick and the ace of clubs.

	North	
	♠ A K Q 10 9 7 2	
	♥ K Q	
	♦ 8 2	
	♣ J 6	
West		East
♠ None		♠ J 8 6 3
♥ 8 7 6 5 4 2		♥ J
♦ 10 9 6 4		♦ J 7 5 3
♣ A 5 2		♣ Q 10 8 7
	South	
	♠ 5 4	
	♥ A 10 9 3	
	♦ A K Q	
	♣ K 9 4 3	

But Mrs Kerr does not concede defeat easily, and at the third trick she led a small club from the dummy. When East played low, Beryl reasoned that with a certain spade trick, East would not have ducked the ace of clubs if she held it, so Beryl went for her only chance by putting in the nine of clubs! West ducked, so Beryl crossed to the queen of hearts and led a low club to the king and West's ace. At this point, the position was:

	North	
	♠ K Q 10 9 7 2	
	♥ None	
	♦ 8 2	
	♣ None	
West		East
♠ None		♠ J 8 6
♥ 8 7 6 5		♥ None
♦ 10 9 6 4		♦ J 7 5
♣ None		♣ Q 10
	South	
	♠ 5	
	♥ A 10	
	♦ A K Q	
	♣ 4 3	

Because of West's earlier club discard, she no longer had a card in the suit to play to East's winners. So she exited with a heart, which Beryl won with the ten. The ace of hearts followed, then the three top diamonds, on the last of which East was squeezed in the black suits, so the contract made! A fine example of the principle that at bridge, you should never give up. ©



Milton Abbey and the lake whose submergence of Middleton gave birth to the model village of Milton Abbas

Villagers battle for future of their lake

WHEN Joseph Damer, Lord Milton, Earl of Dorchester, wanted to improve the views from his Dorset mansion more than 200 years ago he was not going to let the ancient settlement inhabited by his estate workers stand in his way, *writes Geoffrey Gibbs*.

Landscaping designs proposed by Capability Brown called for the creation of a lake in a valley below the house — where the then thriving town of Middleton stood around a medieval abbey. And a lake he would have — now the subject of a battle over its future ownership.

So the model village of Milton Abbas was born. Half a mile from the old town and conveniently obscured from Damer's view, workers were rehoused between 1773 and 1779 in a collection of thatched houses that are today a magnet for tourist coaches.

But it is the future of the lake that is foremost in villagers' minds. Some weeks ago a "for sale" sign appeared, and the community is desperate to prevent the disposal of the lake and surrounding paddocks for commercial development.

"The village has never been so united over anything," says Jane Ling, who has played a leading role in setting up a trust to help seek lottery funding to buy the 38-acre site — part of which is designated an ancient monument.

Their cause has been taken up by the Dorset Wildlife Trust, which sees the lake as ideal for a nature reserve. Grebe, tufted duck and coot are among the birdlife that visit the area, and the lake is also home to the water vole, one of the most threatened mammals in Britain.

The Wildlife Trust has submitted a bid to the Lottery Heritage Fund to support its proposed purchase, and villagers hope their commitment will prove a telling factor in the application.

Even so, the village admits to being twitchy. The family firm selling the lake, which has been run as a game fishery, has made it clear that it is a commercial deal and that it is likely to sell to the first buyer. His lordship would have approved of such pragmatism.

Letter from Turkey David Kennedy

No stone unturned

EARLY breakfast at 5am consists of plain bread and a long glass of cold cherry juice. The drive to Belkis takes about 15 minutes, the final two miles winding around the steep-sided hills just as the first hints of dawn are appearing.

The view as we come round the final bend is stunning: the Turkish Euphrates, broad at this point, has a silvery appearance at dawn. A few lights twinkle from Belkis in the distance and Tilmusa on the far side of the river. Further east still, the horizon is a bright orange-red where the sun is about to rise over the hills towards Edessa.

I tend to think in terms of ancient geography. Roman and Crusader Edessa is 80km away; Harran, home of Abraham and scene of the disaster of the Roman general Crassus, is nearby.

It is surprising that Belkis should be so isolated and unknown. As its old Greek name implies, Zeugma was once a crossing place; indeed, the only permanent bridge over the Euphrates between the Taurus mountains and Babylonia. The Roman road would have been a bustling highway funnelling much of the traffic of northern Syria to this convenient crossing. But today there is not even one of the great box-like ferries.

Belkis, with its 50-odd families, lies on the edge of a buried town twice the size of Roman London. The villagers take it all for granted. The headman has a handful of ancient coins. He also has a drill with which he skilfully copies classical designs on to smooth river stones from a battered copy of Boardman's book on Roman gems.

Greek inscriptions can be seen beneath the whitewash on walls as well as what looks like a font with goats drinking from it. Just beyond the houses lie the openings of the first of many long-looted tombs. The language of the epitaphs is Greek but the names are mostly Semitic: "Monimus. Alas! Farewell."

Zeugma may have disappeared but it lies beneath the village fields. Pistachio trees and wheat overlie ancient houses and shops, temples and roads, and an entire legionary fortress. Mosaics and works of art have been dug out of the fields for at least two centuries and have resurfaced in London, Paris, Berlin and St Petersburg.

Our arrival is a source of a little employment and adds colour to the everyday routine of the villagers. When they are not working with us they take their turns in the hides on the hills providing an armed guard for the valuable pistachio crops.

They are a hardy people and our vulnerability to sickness seems odd to them. When we ran out of imported tap water, Mehmet generously filled a bucket of drinking water for us from the Euphrates. Within 24 hours most of the team developed dysentery and we began to understand why the cemeteries of Zeugma are so extensive.

BUT the way of life is scheduled for permanent change. By 2000 both Zeugma and Belkis will be under 50m of water. Just 500m downstream work is underway on a dam. We are here to try to salvage something before the reservoir forms.

The team and the local village workmen have been excavating on the edge of the riverside scarp, on a villa 100m above the river, with a view to kill for. We had known from a narrow looters' tunnel that there was a mosaic floor in the main room. Further evacuations revealed a superb pavement in a dozen colours. The intricate geometric pattern framed a figured panel depicting a standing male and seated female. Or part of them — the central panel had been hacked out by looters and only the feet and legs survived.

This was to have been the first of several seasons of excavation but in the event no further funding is available: a tragedy for archaeology that so much will be lost. A tragedy too for the villagers whose homes will disappear. Already Belkis and other villages upstream are experiencing a drift away as people anticipate the inevitable. Ten years from now the road to Belkis will stop short at a lake, the valley quieter still than when Freya Stark described it "immured in sunlit silence below the level of the living world".

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

WHY does Canada have the letters CDN as its international car registration plate? Surely it would be more logical to have CND?

THE DN stands for Dominion. The abbreviation was created when Canada was one. — *Bob Hammarberg, Minneapolis, USA*

CANADA has CDN as its international car registration plate instead of CND because the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament got there first, and most of us can't tell a noun from an adjective anyway. — *D W Lawson, Ridgetown, Ontario, Canada*

ARE VCRs available that skip the adverts?

TO BE able to skip the adverts, the VCR will first have to detect the difference between programmes and commercials — no small problem — and then be able to identify the last commercial in the break in order to start recording again.

As commercial breaks in the UK are usually in the range of 1 to 3 minutes, and individual commercials are anything from 10 seconds to 1 minute or so, the technology required to stop and restart the VCR would be considerable.

Within ITV, a system of labelling commercials electronically — called Adlog or EVT (electronic verification of transmission) — was introduced in the eighties. But great care was taken to ensure that the EVT data was erased from the television signal before transmission to prevent anyone producing a device to suppress the adverts. — *Tony Meacock, Norwich*

A DEVICE was available some years ago in America which detected the slight discontinuity in the sync pulses on the switch between programmes and adverts, and placed the machine on pause until the next glitch. In Britain the glitch does not normally occur since the adverts take their sync from the programme source. — *Roger Wilmut, Surbiton, Surrey*

WHAT is the ultimate irony?

THE second law of thermodynamics (simply stated, heat flows from hot to cold) predicts that the universe will reach a final state of thermodynamic equilibrium, or maximum entropy, at which time the universe will be dead. Indeed, if the universe has any purpose, it must end, for to continue on after reaching that purpose would be pointless. The ultimate irony is that the universe dies to make a point. — *James Baird, Woodstock, Georgia, USA*

HAS the evolution of surnames with their origins in occupations or place names ended, or can we look forward to one day meeting Mr Programmer or Ms Consultant?

THE surnames which will date back to the late 20th century will be Mr Downsized, Mrs Homeless and Ms Job-Seeker. — *Duncan Grant, Twickenham, Surrey*

Any answers?

WHAT is the origin of "pinch punch, first day of the month"? — *Lesley Jones, Eltham, London*

A BOOK of herbal remedies warns against using rosemary if you have a heart condition or epilepsy. The book also says that it should not be eaten for more than two days running. Why? — *Yvonne May, Cardiff*

IN A recent episode of Coronation Street, Vera Duckworth complained that she had been "left standing like pilfey on a rock bun". What is pilfey, and why was it on a bun? — *Peter Chadwick, London*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HO. Readers with access to the Internet can respond to Notes & Queries via http://go2.guardian.co.uk/nq/

A Country Diary

Hilary Thompson

SOUTH AUSTRALIA: To someone used to the steady pace of life in the tropics, spring in the Adelaide hills is a turmoil of activity. A few weeks ago, snow was falling on Mount Lofty; now the sun makes it through the cloud most days.

Our resident magpie-larks are working on a second brood in their mud nest high up in the blue gum. The young from the first brood are adolescent and self-supporting, but as with humans, this does not prevent them from begging from their parents. Along the street, almost every bush or small tree seems to have its fledgling red wattlebird, persistently uttering its insect-like call so that the parents can locate it.

The vocals are an important part of the spring performance. In the woodlands, the breeze now carries, or deflects, the elusive deep "coo" of the bronzewing pigeon. Our suburban gardens are still enlivened by the cheerful whistle of the Adelaide rosellas, although many of these blue and orange parrots are now at their nest holes in the woodlands.

The ducks are early starters, braving even the winter winds. Prominent among these are robust hybrids of the native Pacific black duck and the introduced mallard. The first flotillas of ducklings were out on the water in August but the mortality rate seems high.

Spring is not just for the birds. In the depths of winter, koalas fluff up and cling to the limbs of the eucalyptus, their heads huddled in their fur, but now they peer down to look at you as you walk underneath. The warmer weather has also mobilised the reptiles, with the slow but steady shinglebacks and blue-tongued lizards shuffling through the leaf litter and catching the sun wherever they can.

But within a few weeks the wind will blast us with hot dry air. The parching weather will shrivel the green legacy of a wet winter and provide the fuel for future bush fires.

Moving up to a higher Guerre

Martin Guerre has had a refit. But **Michael Billington** believes the age of the musical may be over anyway

THE THEATRE can be a bitchy place. At the first night of Martin Guerre, in July, two well-known lyricists met in the interval. "What do you think of it so far?" one asked the other. The reply came: "It's even worse than I'd hoped."

That sums up the element of schadenfreude in the initial reaction to Martin Guerre: an unholy glee that a team as successful as Boublil and Schönberg and Cameron Mackintosh had come up with a bit of a no-no. But the relaunched version at London's Prince Edward Theatre at least has a narrative drive and coherence missing from the original. It will never be a great musical but it now seems a reasonably proficient show that tells its story clearly.

The new version, with revised lyrics from Stephen Clark, plants the key motifs early on: religious persecution, the centrality of land, the need for the heroine, Bertrande, to produce a Catholic heir.

In a sense, Martin Guerre is an attempt to repeat the pattern of Miss Saigon: pure passion is destroyed by external forces. If the format works better in the earlier show, the reasons are obvious. There is an historic inevitability about the destruction of the love of a Vietnamese girl for an American GI. But here there is something arbitrary about the sudden conversion of Bertrande and Arnaud du Thil, the stranger who passes himself off as her husband with the village's complicity, to Protestantism. This is still the show's glaring weakness: if the conflict between private passion and the destructive nature of Catholic zeal is the show's real theme, why doesn't it do more to explain the attractions of the rival faith?

My own suspicion is that Boublil and Schönberg have bitten off a theme which the musical cannot easily chew; which is why Martin Guerre will always be an intriguing curiosity rather than a global hit. But at least the show's creators have tidied up their act: actually the first act more than the second. And there is still one moment that justifies the form: Arnaud's absorption into the community is symbolised by his echo of their own foot-stamping dancing. It is the best moment in an evening that, even if it doesn't catch at the heart, proves that musicals are not written but re-written.

What is surprising is that anyone needs to be reminded of the fact. Cameron Mackintosh himself has not been slow to point out that the history of the musical is littered with examples of extensive relaunches. Guys And Dolls became a durable classic largely because, after its initial tour, it was taken off the road for 10 months and totally rewritten.

Several morals can be deduced from all this. One is that the musical, because it represents a coalition of diverse talents, needs a strong figure to pull it together. Mackintosh is obviously one such: he manages to combine an innocent, schoolboyish delight in musicals with the steel of a traditional showman. As I came out of Martin Guerre I noticed him standing next to the lighting console at the back of the stalls carefully controlling the curtain calls so that the show's ovation was not allowed to outstay its welcome by a single second. He is clearly a producer who leads from behind as well as from the front.

Musicals, more than any other form, need to be road-tested. It seems to me an act of folly to open a musical "cold" in the West End or on Broadway. Given the expense of touring, I should have thought the answer was to give a show the kind of laboratory testing that Andrew Lloyd Webber achieves in his home-brewed festival at Sydmonton.

But behind all this lurks an even larger question as to whether big musicals, on the scale of Martin Guerre, have a viable future. This one will finally have cost $7.5 million to produce. I suspect we have reached the point where the musical will be forced to contract both because of the murderous economics and shifts in public taste.



From days gone by . . . Juliette Caton and Iain Glen in Cameron Mackintosh's revamped musical Martin Guerre PHOTO: HENRIETTA BUTLER

The rise of the big musical in the 1980s was the product of many things: individual temperament, expanding technology, even paradoxically the effect of economic recession. It was as if, in times of economic uncertainty, audiences craved opulent public escapism to justify the mere act of going out. The musical offered irrationality, fantasy, spectacle at a time when social reality was becoming too much to bear.

Lloyd Webber, in an intriguing interview in a recent issue of Billboard, said: "Backstage costs in London, as in New York, have now reached really dangerous levels. I have a feeling that the day of the big musical is ending and that, although Cats, Les Mis and Phantom will be with us for a long time to come, they may well be the first and last of their kind."

I suspect he is right. After an age of giantism, there will be a return to musicals on a more human scale. I certainly hope so. What the musical has lost in recent years is the capacity to engage us through well-written books recognisable human dilemmas: all the qualities that pervaded the American musical in its heyday in the forties and fifties and that account for the current vogue for revivals. The musical, by definition, will always be somewhat larger and more expansive than life: but, unless it rediscovers its roots in lived experience, it will turn into an inoperable behemoth. Although Martin Guerre has been much improved in its rewritten version, it still suggests to me the end of a particular historical phase rather than a new beginning.

Back on the blocks

DANCE
Judith Mackrell

WHEN Prince Of The Pagodas was premiered in 1989 it was a milestone production for the Royal. It was the ballet with which MacMillan finally made his truce with the Opera House after a long, uneasy absence. It was the ballet, too, in which he famously plucked Darcey Bussell out of the corps and turned her into a star. And it was the ballet that launched Bussell's partnership with Jonathan Cope. Is it a classic or not? Unfortunately, the motorist who bumped Cope off his motorbike earlier this month had no respect for ballet history. So instead of revisiting the title role as planned, Cope was at home mending a broken rib. His place at Bussell's side for the revival was taken by Stuart Cassidy.

Cassidy has danced the role before, but not with Bussell, and Pagodas is unfortunately a ballet where you need to know your partner well. The central _pas de deux_ are unrelenting — pirouettes that wilfully push against the movement's natural flow; lifts and balances that can be demolished by a split second's hesitation. There were certainly moments where you sensed a hiss of breath and a hasty readjustment in Bussell and Cassidy's partnering. But they weren't serious enough to get in the way of a calm second look at the ballet — and the recognition that Pagodas, controversial at its opening, still provokes both annoyance and awe.

Georgiadis's designs continue to look impressive, their surreal mix of Jacobean and oriental imagery both brutal and exquisite. Britten's score, however, is as frustrating as it is enchanting. The theatrical set pieces for the four wicked Kings and the Prince (who's been bewitched into a salamander) are full of strange lights and haunting rhythms that inspire MacMillan to startling invention. But in other passages MacMillan has trouble imposing his dance over Britten's high floating lines and choppy rhythms.

The performances, though, hold up strongly. Bussell created Princess Rose when she was only 20 — and her trump card was her artless courage. Now the innocence with which she surrounds Rose is a more calculated quality — but far more compelling. Bussell has grown up and she knows how to carry a core of stillness in her dancing and how to phrase a movement so that it hangs vibrating in the air. She makes serene sense out of the most asymmetric challenges of the choreography.

Cassidy as her Prince doesn't possess the slithery length of limb that made Cope so elegant a salamander, but he compensates with a reptilian urgency — his body flickering between light and dark, quickness and immobility — that is mesmerising.

If audiences are unlikely to vote it a popular classic, both the score and the choreography are rich enough and odd enough to beg for a second viewing.

On the trail of the Mad March Harle

JAZZ
John Fordham

THERE'S nothing half-hearted about John Harle. This big, deceptively easy-going man, with a merciless line in mockery — of himself and others — fell in love with the saxophone at a time in the seventies when hardly anybody else in classical music took it seriously. That might have helped him cope later with the frenzy that greeted his premiere of Harrison Birtwistle's uncompromisingly byzantine sax concerto in 1995's Last Night Of The Proms.

Harle plays everything he touches with conviction, whether it's his show or not. As Michael Nyman's regular saxophonist, it's his delicately incisive soprano sax you can hear on that composer's famous soundtrack for the film The Piano.

An ex-Army bandsman who often hilariously reconstructs the Bilko-esque antics of his military days, Harle loves the classical world's precision and order, but dislikes its conservatism of repertoire. He is testing musical tolerances to the limit by touring a band that combines a string quartet, a classical soprano, jazz saxist Andy Sheppard, and Elvis Costello singing Shakespeare.

"People now expect composers to have multi-disciplinary skills, but it's about musical coherence more than simply expecting audiences to go 'Wow!' if you just throw a string quartet and a group of panpipers from the Andes on a stage together. I've tried not to take people out of context." Nailing his colours to the mast with typical brio, he has called the show (and the newly released album) Terror And Magnificence. Nothing so frivolous for him as An Evening With John And Elvis.

In Manchester last week, the band played to an initially reserved audience of classical fans surprised by the volume, Sheppard fans surprised by the careful order, Costello fans surprised by the lack of rock 'n' roll.

But the point grew on them. The Sheppard fans shifted a little closer to the edges of their seats when the jazzman's swooping, buffeting tenor sax soliloquies began to intertwine with Harle's pure, stately lyricism. Costello's faithfuls cheered his handling of O Mistress Mine.

Terror And Magnificence itself, a long two-saxophone feature moving between haunting, ethereal high-note themes and thrashing, percussive odysseys, revealed more of its intended tensions than it has before. The collisions between what sound like eighties club grooves and the 14th century French poetry on the backing tape were far less distracting than they have been previously.

Harle once let on that he feared Sheppard's spontaneity, while Sheppard was anxious about Harle's precision. But the interplay between the two is now remarkably relaxed. And the contrast of the voices — Costello's bruised, yearning sound on the Shakespeare sonnets, Sarah Leonard's cool, unfussy clarity — remoulds treacherously familiar material to make it glow again with a seductive light.

If Harle rejects the convenient crossover tag, does he still perceive himself as a classical musician on a gig like this? "I choose to be regarded as a classical musician," he says emphatically. "I believe in classical proportion and classical reasonings.

"But there's room for extemporisation, when it's knitted within the proportions. Andy and I did Hunting The Hare completely differently and about twice as long in Manchester as we did elsewhere, but it was still absolutely true to the structure." Hunting The Hare began out of nowhere in Manchester — a wild, whooping sax exchange turning to the soft caress of the theme, and then contrasting Sheppard's gritty sonorousness against Harle's haughty delicacy. It was maybe the best example of what Harle is driving at. Both artists embraced the idea of music as written, but both had the space to be utterly themselves.

The Terror And Magnificence CD is out on the Decca/Argo label

Like her or Kuala Lumpur

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

SOMEWHERE up there is a star called Mrs Raquel Watts. Before Curly Watts married Raquel Wolstenhulme, he named a star after her as a token of his adoration. Curly is a great romantic with a terrible haircut.

It is a mistake to call a star after the love of your life. Heaven is full of busted flushes. You can have "Curly loves Raquel for ever and ever Amen" removed from your ribcage. You can't shift a star. The celestial Mrs Raquel Watts shines where she always did but the real Mrs Raquel Watts is on her way to Kuala Lumpur. Mr Watts is on his way to Wigan.

This week in Coronation Street (Granada) Raquel applied for and was offered an aromatherapist's job. She told the interviewing panel that she spoke a little French. "As long as I'm not talking to a French person." They thought she was joking. Raquel never jokes. She is funny because she innocently tells the truth.

It did come as a surprise that the job was in Kuala Lumpur. It was less of a surprise if you know the Coronation Street writers. They love a luscious name. Hence Raquel Wolstenhulme. Hence Kuala Lumpur.

Curly rolled the words around his mouth like humbugs. "Kuala Lumpur! You've only got to say it and you know it's not on. Kuala Lumpur. Where is it anyway? Ku-a-la Lum-pur. 'Where's Raquel?' 'Oh she's off in Kuala Lumpur.' I mean . . ." and he pulled on his mac. It wasn't raining but this is Manchester and it might.

Kevin Kennedy as Curly carried the full weight of the dialogue, whirling around Raquel's deepening silence. He could not, at first, believe she was seriously considering Kuala Lumpur and, for a while, sat in his car outside his house like a man who knows he has forgotten something, overlooked something . . .

Then he knew what it was. "Did they know you were married? I'm stupid, me. What did you do with your ring?"

She had told the interviewing panel that she had no ties or commitments. We had never heard her lie before. We didn't know she could.

Raquel has been a rare creation, lovely, funny and incapable of unkindness. Goodness, as a rule, is not photogenic. Sarah Lancashire, who is leaving Coronation Street, created something exceptional in Raquel. Off hand I can't think of anything comparable except Monroe herself, who wafted around on the same fluffy cloud of childlike daffiness.

Introduced casually five years ago as a beauty queen, she and the writers have put a wicket-splintering spin on dumb blondeness.

Julian Roach wrote an aching elegy for Curly. He said: "I thought that maybe I could shoot the both of us, if I can't have you. Only I haven't got a gun. I'm glad to say. At least it's Kuala Lumpur . . . at least it's not a bloke. Well, there will be a bloke in the long run. You can't go through your life without fancying anybody and you don't fancy me. It's all right. I know the truth. But then again, I always did. Didn't I?"

Raquel had married him on the rebound and he could never quite believe his luck. "The way I look at you when you're taking your make-up off . . . the way I look at you when you're doing your hair. And you don't even know I'm looking at you and I want you so much, it's so overwhelming. The only overwhelming feeling you have ever had for me is either guilt or pity. It's only chocolate money and it's nearly very, very convincing but it's only chocolate money. Well, I'm a grown-up and I need the other kind or not at all."

It can't be quite coincidental that Coronation Street is now sponsored by Cadbury's chocolate money.

'Help! The director's lost the plot' . . . Keaton, Midler and Hawn on the edge in The First Wives Club

Feelgood disaster

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

THERE'S nothing worse than trying to find an opener for the London Film Festival that will satisfy everyone, as I know from personal experience. But at least **The First Wives Club**, which kicked off the festival this year and now opens commercially, gave the sponsors a Hollywood hit. The film progresses towards the $100 million mark at the box-office in America and will do good business in Britain.

Unfortunately, it is not very good. Some at the LFF opening said it was pretty bad. But most agreed that it was partially saved by lively performances from Goldie Hawn, Bette Midler and Diane Keaton as the three wives deserted by their husbands and bent on revenge.

These three go to it with a will born of experience, and director Hugh Wilson contents himself with watching them as closely as he can. Performance movies, however, need a better screenplay than Robert Harling's. It has a fair sprinkling of decent jokes but no shape, so that the film progresses from its cleverly contemporary premise down an alleyway that leads nowhere, and weakens its argument with the most blatant compromise.

These at first forlorn middle-aged Manhattanites are so quickly redrawn as active and well-preserved that the younger models whom their cipher-like men go for are outgunned. The real argument about what kind of life you have left if you have spent half of it nurturing a man who now wants a younger model is scarcely addressed seriously. The argument that this is a comedy won't wash since a fourth wife commits suicide and, anyway, comedy that does not have a basis of truth and argument is nothing but jokes.

The film looks choppily edited, poorly shot and slackly directed, so that its stars have to rattle to distract attention from the emptiness of the vessel; it isn't a good film at all.

The playing is its reason for being. Goldie Hawn, playing someone close to herself — an actress who can't get the star parts that were once hers by right — doesn't even try to avoid comparison between the real and the fictional. She whacks through her part with a familiar gutsy abandon, drinking bucketfuls of alcohol, screaming at her doctor for more collagen in her already pouting lips and bitterly complaining of the injustice of life's short span of womanly glory.

Bette Midler, playing the dowdiest with some aplomb, also seems the most real, while Diane Keaton thrashes about convincingly as the woman whose analyst turns out to be her husband's new conquest.

Hawn, Midler and Keaton do have some genuinely sparky sequences, like their panic when, marooned on a building-site platform, they find it hurtling down the side of a skyscraper. And the moment when they quarrel viciously among themselves at least comes near the nitty-gritty of their emotional situation. Otherwise, this is a film whose feelgood ending is a cop-out and which never has the guts to follow any of its arguments to a conclusion.

Maggie Smith and Stockard Channing are also involved, which will raise further hopes — but they have too little to do while the younger women and the wicked men are no more than the decorations on last year's Christmas tree. But let's be charitable. The First Wives Club is easy enough to get through. It just goes in one eye and out the other.

Easily the best film of an otherwise dim week is Yim Ho's The Day the Sun Turned Cold, which comes from Hong Kong but was made in mainland China. A young man goes to an urban police station to report that, years ago, his mother murdered his father in the village where the family lived. The inspector is sceptical and only reluctantly takes up the case. And the locals are not happy.

The film, with many flashbacks, is both a psychological thriller and a study of a backward society struggling along in an uncertain present. It is acted with a quietly tenacious skill and shot so that the ordinariness of everyday life gives further point to the story.

It is not as dramatic as Zhang Yimou might have made it, nor as picturesque as a Chen Kaige film. But Yim Ho's picture of violent emotions surfacing within a community trying hard to make ends meet is undeniably impressive. It's one of the outstanding films of the year from this part of the world.

The queen of Latin kitsch

Astrid Hadad, in London with her cabaret act, talks to **Philip Sweeney**

MEXICO CITY, early summer: Astrid Hadad and her Heavy Nopal Review take to the minuscule stage of an arty little cabaret restaurant in converted turn-of-the-century racehorse stables. Hadad — small, fast-talking, intense, her aquiline features indicating her half-Lebanese parentage — flits on and off stage in a succession of extravagant and ingenious costumes. Foam-rubber skulls festoon skirts, lizards climb bodices, and huge sombreros. A big dripping foam heart, dangling copious coronary plumbing, manifests itself for her song Corazon Sangrante (Bleeding Heart). For Me Golpeaste Tanto Anoche (You Beat Me So Hard Last Night), the classic ranchera from her first album, Ay!, Hadad retreats momentarily behind a screen to don bruises, splints and crutches as she wails out the lament of forties rural, working-class womanhood ("Hit my face, wound my body, but please don't leave me . . .") to a chic, middle-class nineties audience sipping margaritas.

This is Latin kitsch, the wave of self-parody, more or less camp and more or less affectionate, which, catalysed by the Spanish film-maker Pedro Almodóvar, broke on the shores of Spain in the eighties and is still washing around the Hispanic world today. A strong whiff of this movement attends the season of Latin American performance, Corpus Delecti, at London's ICA.

Hadad is combining Delecti with a tour of the UK. For half a dozen years now, her Heavy Nopal Review (the nopal is the quintessentially Mexican cactus whose juice is distilled to make tequila) has been touring concert halls and festivals both in Mexico and abroad. ("This place is my caprice," says Hadad after the show. "Cabaret is my inspiration, so I like it here.") Hadad, who left Mexico City's Centro Universitario de Teatro 10 years ago and embarked on an acting career spanning the extremes of Mexican TV soaps and all-female productions of Mozart opera, created the Heavy Nopal concept with her five-piece backing group, Los Tarzanes.

What were her references? "I'd recently graduated from theatre school. I was singing, but bored with just singing. I wanted to include a strong visual side, with make-up based on expressionism and German cabaret from the 1930s, as well as an element of Mexican popular culture from the same period, the *carpas*, which were a sort of circus, very popular in the twenties and thirties, with a constant stream of new songs and comic political criticism and singing stars like Maria Conesa, 'The Little White Cat'."

And, of course, the ranchera, the melodramatic country song turned national music, staple of the mariachi bands, and, above all, of singing stars such as Lola Beltran, who died last year, and her great predecessors, such as Lucha Reyes, who OD'ed on barbiturates in 1944.

What about Almodovar and the camp sensibility? "Yes, Almodovar was influential in Mexico, and the gay scene has been an important breeding ground for alternative cabaret. The key figure in repopularising the ranchera, Juan Gabriel [the star singer-songwriter, perhaps Mexico's biggest individual artist] is gay, though not satirical . . ."

If the camping up of Latino classics is spreading (I recently saw another Mexican ranchera artiste — the utterly authentic red-neck club singer Paquita la del Barrio — perplexed as an audience of smart young Madrid women howled with laughter at her entirely un-postmodern melodramatics), this does not preclude good music. Hadad's Tarzanes are excellent musicians, and the arrangements and Hadad's rendition are polished and powerful, even more so on her records. "I love the old music, I try to treat it with respect, to exaggerate lyrics perhaps, but to create serious music."



Astrid Hadad . . . 'Cabaret is my inspiration'

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Fear of the new

Christopher Frayling

Modernism
by Richard Weston
Phaidon 240pp £45.00

ENGLISH culture in the inter-war years proved peculiarly resistant to modernism in architecture and design. Of the great emigré architects and Bauhaus-ers who arrived in London during the thirties, Berthold Lubetkin was reduced to designing the penguin pool at London zoo, László Moholy-Nagy produced window displays for Simpson's in Piccadilly, while Walter Gropius was turned down for the job of principal of the Royal College of Art. "It would, I fear, be out of the question to appoint Dr Gropius," wrote a panic-stricken civil servant. He was thought too intellectual, too rational, too much of a functionalist, too European and . . . too modern.

When modernism was associated with seaside resorts such as Bexhill, or cinema posters, a film like Things To Come or penguins, it was quite fun: in a Punch cartoon, a fashionable flapper shrieked ecstatically: "My dear, how exquisitely unfurnished." Modernism as leisure pursuit became haute culture for a season or two, but when it was associated with real places in which to live or work, Modernism (with a big M) was out of the question — despite the missionary efforts of a group of designers and critics who subscribed to the Architectural Review and usually lived in Hampstead.

Paradoxically, these missionaries produced some of the great books about a modern movement whose slogans — "form follows function", "fitness for purpose", "ornament a crime", "machines for living in", "less is more" — proved a great deal more subtle and complex than they at first appeared, and whose consistency evaporated the closer one looked at it. Herbert Read's Art And Industry (1934), Nikolaus Pevsner's Pioneers Of The Modern Movement (1936, later retitled Pioneers Of Modern Design) and a series of articles in the Listener which accompanied BBC radio talks about "design in modern life" are still well worth reading. Inter-war England certainly made a vital contribution to the literature of modernism: interpretations rather than performances. And this book, by architect and teacher Richard Weston, belongs to that tradition.

The roots of global modernism are traced back to Brunel father and son, the Crystal Palace at the Great Exhibition of 1851, Owen Jones's Grammar Of Ornament, and the Arts and Crafts movement. In apostolic succession, Morris begat Lethaby who begat the Bauhaus, via the Vienna Secession and the Deutscher Werkbund. Subsequent chapters examine "the shock of the new" in the fine arts around the time of the first world war; the "return to order" in the work of De Stijl and Le Corbusier; art and revolution in twenties Soviet Union; the transformation of modernism as a set of formal and aesthetic principles (and working practices) into an international style, following an influential exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1932. Plus, finally, the injection of modernism into the cultural bloodstream of the West, during the consumer boom following the second world war.

Each chapter is accompanied by quotations from documents and manifestos, and terrific illustrations laid out against acres of snow white as if they were shapes in a Mondrian painting. An elegiac punchline describes recent developments in architecture and design as "merely rummaging over history, or living off the astonishing creative outburst of early modernism, rather than extending or transforming the tradition of the new".

Modernism (the title is in designerly lower case although the story is defiantly upper case) retells the history of the movement in the style of Pevsner's Pioneers — the main difference being that Pevsner was writing when modernism seemed to be about to inherit the earth, whereas Weston is writing at a time when his readers have yet to recover from the trauma of debased local authority modernism (in the form of cheaply constructed tower blocks where form followed finance) of the sixties. So that, whereas Pevsner's Pioneers seemed like a bible, Weston's modernism seems more like a lament about a fall from grace.

IT IS AT its best when dealing with "simultaneity" (a favourite word of the twenties) across various cultures: Taylorism, Henry Ford and the American system at the same time as cubism in Europe; Finnish designer Alvar Aalto's bentwood chairs at the same time as the De La Warr pavilion in Bexhill.

There are a few not very convincing attempts to draw parallels with the present day: the Bauhaus "basic design" course with "the way the sculptor Andy Goldsworthy now works with natural materials"; twenties graphics with Neville Brody and style magazines; futurist happenings with Monty Python's Flying Circus. Architecture and virtuoso pieces of furniture are the star attractions; everyday objects of desire are scarcely mentioned and so the recent literature of the history of design does not feature. The work of women designers — such as Charlotte Perriand (who designed most of the "Corbusier chair") and Eileen Gray — merits only a couple of lines.

In general, Weston does not seem very interested in how modernism was viewed from outside the charmed circle of architects and theorists: the New York show Modern Architecture of 1932 is credited with disseminating "the new architecture . . . in the English-speaking world", and yet by then Hollywood movies had been featuring the latest designs from Europe for at least three years.

Nevertheless the book is handsome, and useful as a work of reference. Now that the icons of modernism in Bexhill and London zoo have become listed buildings, it is evidently OK to get misty-eyed about them. Modernism has become part of the heritage — so long as we don't have to confront its implications today.

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Fay Weldon . . . tapping into paranoia based on passionate hatred PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN REARDON

Flogging a dead husband

Natasha Walter

Worst Fears
by Fay Weldon
Flamingo 196pp £16.99

SHE'S ON to her 21st novel, but Fay Weldon's supply of sour wit shows no signs of drying up. The popular appeal of her novels rests on reverse escapism; readers don't long to escape into her milieux, rather they hug themselves for joy that they don't have to live in the tragic worlds that she creates. This novel is even thinner and more slapdash than many in her oeuvre — but still her characteristic tone, a pure distillation of schadenfreude, rises from the pages.

Here is a woman whose husband has just died, and who begins the book in a state of gentle mourning. "She would not find his like again," Alexandra thinks. It is a quiet, almost generous beginning, unusual for Weldon. But soon her extraordinary talent for nastiness takes over; Alexandra begins to find out that all the hints and clues left by the knowing women around her add up to an intolerable truth. Her husband was a philanderer, engaged on a long affair with a pathetic, ugly woman, for whom he had already left the marital home, and with whom he really did seem to have a better time than with the beautiful and talented Alexandra. Humiliation is heaped on humiliation, as Alexandra comes to realise that all her love and faith were founded on a lie.

We are all paranoid up to a point; all capable of wondering what if — what if he only pretends to love me, what if we have stumbled into a conspiracy, what if the whole world was constructed just to expose me as a dupe. Fay Weldon's one achievement here is to tap into that paranoia. She founds the novel on passionate hatred; not just Alexandra's hatred for her husband's mistress, and vice versa, but a complicated web of scorn, contempt, revenge and disgust, that links every character in the book.

And so Weldon plays to her strengths; she has always preferred exploring loathing rather than loving. Conversations that begin in a familiar social context quickly slip into a framework in which contempt is the only emotion to be communicated. "Stop blubbing!" shouts her mother when Alexandra indulges in a few tears. "Haven't we had enough of this grieving widow act?" says Alexandra's brother-in-law. Alexandra is "a marriage-breaker, a bitch, a cow, a slag", her husband's ex-wife tells her; "You are the foulest woman in the world," his mistress offers. The characters are backed up by a narrator's eye that sees ugliness in everything, from the legs of an elderly woman, "in pink rubber sandals with very thick stockings", to the appearance of the mistress, "her plump bottom in its dreadful skirt", to Alexandra's own garden, "greenfly multiplied on the roses, blackfly on every yellow flower around". In a moment of caprice, Weldon has tacked a happy ending on to this catalogue of unhappiness. But in this world, happiness is only successful revenge, and if we feel relieved when we turn the last page, it is in expectation of returning to a world where there are more emotions than anger and misery, and more motivations than revenge and spite.

Ghetto blasters

Maria Alvarez

Push
by Sapphire
Secker & Warburg 180pp £7.99

Drown
by Junot Diaz
Faber 164pp £7.99

"*DON'T* push me cos I'm close to the edge," sang the rapper, Grandmaster Flash, in 1982 — an oracle from the contemporary New York ghetto. In Push, a harrowing novel-come-journal of a teenage Harlem black girl, pushing becomes an agent both for, and against, victimisation.

Illiterate until the age of 16 and unnaturally fat, Precious has been systematically pushed: sexually abused and beaten by both parents since she was barely out of Pampers and neglected by the educational system. When Precious collapses with the contractions heralding her first child by her own crack-head father, her mother boots her in the face for good measure. A kind ambulance man urges her to "push" in labour.

Four years on, once again pregnant, she is encouraged to push again by her sympathetic adult literacy teacher. This time the fight is a figurative one, against the injustice of her history. Her armour is her newly discovered voice. "Sure you can do anything when you talking or writing, it's not like living when you can only do what you doing." This voice — rawly authentic, sardonically in defiance of its own limitations and the catalogue of horrors depicted — is the novel's greatest triumph. Incestual rape, a Downs Syndrome baby, compulsive eating, HIV — all are heaped one upon the other. It is perilously on the edge of black humour but the relentlessness bespeaks a certain honesty. Some lives, after all, defy even melodrama.

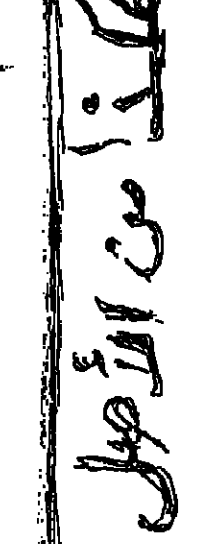
By far the most disturbing psychological light thrown by this novel is on the feeling of shame experienced by the sexually abused when their body occasionally responds, independent of their nausea.

Though set in the poverty-stricken barrios of the Dominican Republic and the Bronx's street corners, the violence in Drown — a collection of short stories told through the eyes of young Hispanic-American street kids — is more of a hovering menace: the odd cuff here, a muted torture there. The scenario is one sociological notch up from the fetid parental inferno of Push.

All the underclass staples are here — serially absent fathers, pubertal anal sex, drug dealing — but the vestige of expanded Latino family life remains. Mothers are long-suffering and their sons love them. Emotions are sounded, and they chime across the social gulf. A boy searches obsessively among excrement-smeared crack dens for the girl that he loves; another discourses on how to lay girls of different shades of skin colour, another (perhaps the same one) fantasises about the upstairs neighbour. Underlying it all is melancholy and disappointment — an endless waiting for *nada*.

Drown shares with Push the same imperative, violent, single-word title and the same spirited indelicacy of metaphor ("the sun sliding out off the sky like spit off a wall"). Of the two, Diaz is the more subtle writer. He has that rare gift of delineating a recognisable trademark world of his own with just a few deft strokes. He has placed the Hispanic-American oral tradition firmly on the literary map, transforming it into vitreously beautiful prose with immaculate rhythm.

But the well of ghetto argot is a deep one. In an age dominated by the thud of violence and the flicker of the screen, the dandyish message from the New York street, as evidenced here and in rap, is that words constitute the best defence against drowning, pushing and turning into a *zángano*. (Look it up.)



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

London: A Social History, by Roy Porter (Penguin, £15)

PEOPLE have been trying to pin London's story down for some time; it is one of the city's strengths that all histories are partial and provisional. "London was always a muddle that worked," Porter says and he tells a fascinating story, rich in detail, anecdote and hard historical fact, from the town's first-century Roman beginnings to Ken Livingstone's Fares Fair policy and the abolition of the GLC by you-know-who — which Porter rightly describes as an act of wanton vindictiveness and one which seems to have sealed the city's doom. But then again London has been finished off before — each time, at the hands of Britons: Boudicca and Thomas Farrinor, in AD 61 and 1666 respectively.

The Music, by James Hamilton-Paterson (Vintage, £5.99)

ONE tends, these days, to look at or even acclaim short stories with a sense of forlorn and insincere duty; but this collection is anything but moribund. The wheeze behind H-P's stories is that they include, as pivotal moments, something to do with music: a Yugoslavian refugee who is transformed when he picks up a guitar; a composer who writes a cryptically subversive national anthem for an Eastern Bloc state. H-P uses his MacGuffin to liberate him rather than tie him down; 10 pages into the book, you realise you are reading one of the best writers alive (I'm sorry: he's as good as that). Even the weakest story is a joy.

The Rear View, by Jean-Luc Hennig, trs Margaret Crosland and Elfreda Powell (Souvenir Press, £10.99)

SUBTITLE: "a brief and elegant history of bottoms through the ages." And it is. You might not have thought that there was enough available to make a book, but Hennig has done plenty of research, and he has just the right tone, urbanely intelligent yet clearly devoted to his subject, to pass it off delightfully. His prose is so precisely descriptive that we do not regret the paucity of illustrations. Although this is a blessing in his chapter on tortures involving bottoms.

Star Trek Memories, by William Shatner, "with" Chris Kreski (Voyager, £6.99)

I PICKED this book up by the corner with a sneer. And yet . . . well, it is the most atrociously written book I have ever guiltily enjoyed. For Shatner's memoirs of the happy days spent making that TV show are horribly smirking, self-serving and irritating; yet I cannot deny the residual fascination that this turkey might have for even its closet fans. By the time they stopped filming, half the cast wanted to zap Shatner with his own photon torpedoes. Read this and find out why.

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ILLUSTRATION: DANIEL PUDLES

The grandeur that was life

Tim Radford

Life's Grandeur: The Spread Of Excellence From Plato To Darwin
by Stephen Jay Gould
Jonathan Cape 244pp £16.99

The Origins Of Virtue
by Matt Ridley
Viking 295pp £20

TO STEPHEN JAY GOULD, this could be the Age of Bacteria. Indeed, it has been the Age of Bacteria for the whole 3.5 billion years of creation. Matt Ridley on the other hand makes a case for calling it the Age of Grasses.

Grasses have only been around for 25 million years or so, about the same time that monkeys and apes separated. Humans evolved on the African grasslands, and still plant grasses like wheat and rice wherever they go. "You could plausibly argue that grass is the master of the planet, because it has employed us as its slave," says Ridley.

Gould makes the case for the microbes: the tree of life at its simplest is three linked bushes of single-celled creatures called bacteria, archaea and eukarya. All the plants and all the animals in the world are perched on two little twigs on the eukaryotic bush. Oaks and octopi, orang-utans and orioles are as nothing: life is driven by microbes and there could be so many of them, deep under the planet's surface, that if you could spread them evenly with a knife, like Marmite, they would sit five feet thick over the entire land surface of the planet.

Why do we buy these books? Because they tell us something new about our place in the scheme of things. Ever since Darwin, it has become increasingly clear that we are what we are because we were what we were. Decades ago, biologist-writers like Konrad Lorenz and Desmond Morris persuaded us that under a civilised surface we were still animals, territorial, aggressive. This is the chocolate brazil theory of humankind: smooth coating, tough nut underneath. Some of today's Darwinian hardliners wouldn't let us hang on to the consolations of the sweet veneer.

Matt Ridley is a columnist for the Daily Telegraph, and can't help making it all seem simple. In his version, hunter-gatherers share meat for the same reason that vampire bats share blood: those who share now expect to benefit themselves, another day. It's just insurance. He makes a big thing out of a game beloved of theorists called the Prisoner's Dilemma, which is about calculating whether to shaft your neighbour before he shafts you, or put your trust in mutual aid. So in the Ridley version giving blood or working in Rwanda will enhance your reputation for virtue and make people more likely to trust you in prisoner's dilemmas. Such acts scream out "I am an altruist, trust me!" He works not just from zoology, but from economics and history, and he can't resist Telegraphing a few punches, at tree-huggers and socialists and self-deluding people who think savages might have been noble and so on. In the last chapter he concludes that St Augustine, Hobbes, Rousseau and Lenin were all wrong. Too much government is bad. Social and material exchange between equals is good, because it is the raw material of trust.

Ridley's book has an enormous sweep, yet in the end he seems to have said surprisingly little. Gould takes a question that would leave most people cold — why a major league baseball batting average of 0.400 is a thing of the past — and proceeds to amble through the argument with the twinkle of someone who always wanted to bore for Boston. "I do not wish", he says at one point, "to address this technical subject at length in a book for general readers (but see McShea, 1992, 1993, 1994 and Thomas, 1993 for interesting discussion)."

GOULD GETS away with it. He has something profound to say. It is also, in many ways, familiar. Gould doesn't believe in progress. He has been saying this for all his literary life: evolution does not equal progress. He says something else: we are not here now because of where we were then, we are here now because we were lucky. There is nothing inevitable about increasing complexity, and complexity does not equal progress. Readers will find some almost alarming discussion of statistical skewing, and some impenetrable stuff about the scoring of baseball. Persevere: there are deep lessons. The horse is not the high point of evolution from the Hyracotherium, it is actually the last in an unsuccessful line, the remnant of a remnant. So, come to that, is Homo sapiens. If you want mammalian examples of success stories, turn to the rats, the bats and the antelopes — but no one ever does.

Gould's point is that if the left wall of the graph of creation is a simple microbe, then whatever is to the right will seem complex, but that won't be progress, or victory: the microbes are still there, and we need them more than they need us.

His other point is about the drunkard's walk: if the choice is between bouncing off the wall or sprawling in the gutter, then the drunkard must end in the gutter sooner or later. Life's brute realities simply tip us in one direction rather than another.

All major league baseball players get better, so batsmen find it harder to shine. Species move towards their limits: skyscrapers can't get much higher; composers will have a problem improving on Bach or Beethoven. The glory is in the variation itself. After this, I might have one more go at watching baseball.

Life's Grandeur can be ordered from Books@TheGuardianWeekly at the special price of £12.99 and The Origins Of Virtue for £16

Mechanical mystery tour

Alex Clark

The Calcutta Chromosome
by Amitav Ghosh
Picador 309pp £15.99

AT THE beginning of Amitav Ghosh's hugely enjoyable novel, the Egyptian computer operator Antar loses patience with his know-it-all machine, Ava. "Stop showing off," he shouts, "shut up." But Ava merely takes this as another challenge to her abilities, regurgitating the simple command in all the world's languages.

This is just one instance where one person's words are seized on by another, in a book which throws its voice as often as it changes its location and time-frame. Split between Calcutta in the 1890s and the 1990s and a slightly fast-forwarded, futuristic New York, this is an ingenious concoction of technobabble, scientific conundrum and ghost story.

Antar is sitting in his New York apartment, teleworking for a rather terrifying organisation called the International Water Council, watching diligently as Ava runs through inventories of seemingly disparate objects from around the world.

Suddenly, she throws up an anomaly: the identity card of a former colleague of Antar's, reproduced in all its dog-eared and forlorn reality. Antar recognises the man as Murugan, a slightly crazed misfit who disappeared a few years before, in 1995. What follows is a picaresque, fast-paced narrative which radiates from the calm centre of Antar's apartment to the thickly crowded streets of modern-day Calcutta and the sweaty claustrophobia of makeshift Victorian laboratories.

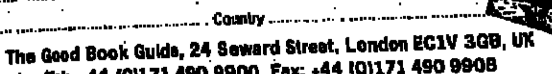
Ghosh's manifest ability to vary pace and tone, to switch between the restraint and caution of Antar's meticulous recorded electronic world to Murugan's haphazard, intuited and visceral one, gives one much to admire and ponder.

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Captain courageous: Liverpool skipper John Barnes rides the tackle of Leeds United's Paul Beesley during the Merseysiders' 2-0 victory at Elland Road on Saturday PHOTOGRAPH: MARTYN HARRISON

Football Premiership: Everton 7 Southampton 1

High-Speed demolition

Ian Ross

WHEN a side is so soundly beaten there are always going to be mitigating circumstances. More often than not they are fanciful excuses born of sheer desperation.

The truth here was that Southampton did not boast a full complement of players until 11 minutes into the second half, when Gordon Watson replaced Matthew Le Tissier. Le Tissier had made little impact on the game.

It would have been interesting to hear Graeme Souness's observations on his captain's abject display, but the manager who loathes defeat with an almost unique passion could barely find the words to describe his disappointment.

"Do I need to say anything at all?" he inquired. "In the end we were just happy to get away with losing by only six goals." Before the subject of Le Tissier could be raised he was up, out of his seat and away.

Southampton had arrived on Merseyside with an eight-game unbeaten sequence, but Everton felled their lofty ambition with a performance of spirit, enterprise and maturity that hints at a bright future.

The manager Joe Royle has been in place for exactly two years ago and while he concedes that expectation has often outstripped actual performance, his side does now contain up to five players of enviable quality.

Southampton were obliterated, overrun to such an extent that many of those bedecked in blue favours actually appeared embarrassed for the visitors. It could have been worse, for once a side has sub-consciously acknowledged it is beaten — a collective decision Southampton reached midway through the first half — anything at all is possible.

As Souness said in his brief but damning postscript, Everton looked like scoring every time they moved forward. Five times the hapless Chris Woods was beaten in the opening half as Everton submerged the visitors. There simply was no respite from a wave of attacks.

Graham Stuart, from close range, and Andrei Kanchelskis, with a precise left-foot finish, set the tone before the rot really set in. Two from Gary Speed and a second for Kanchelskis reduced Southampton to rubble inside 35 minutes.

The second half was an irrelevance but there was time for Nick Barmby to log his first goal since his arrival from Middlesbrough and for Speed to complete his first Premiership hat-trick. Egil Ostenstad's goal for Southampton represented consolation in its hollowest form.

Football results and leading positions

FA CUP: First round: Ashford Town 2, Dagenham & Redbridge 2; Blackpool 1, Wigan Athletic 0; Boreham Wood 1, Rushden 1; Boston 3, Morecambe 0; Brentford 2, Bournemouth 0; Bromley 1, Enfield 3; Bristol Rovers 1, Exeter 2; Burnley 2, Lincoln 1; Cambridge 3, Welling 0; Cardiff 2, Hendon 0; Carlisle 6, Shepshed 0; Chesterfield 1, Bury 0; Chester 3, Stalybridge 0; Colchester 1, Wycombe 2; Colwyn Bay 1, Wrexham 1; Crewe 4, Kidderminster 1; Farnborough 2, Barnet 2; Gillingham 1, Hereford 0; Hartlepool 0, York 0; Hednesford 2, Southport 1; Leyton Orient 2, Merthyr 1; Macclesfield 0, Rochdale 2; Mansfield 4, Consett 0; Newcastle 0, Notts County 2; Northampton 0, Watford 1; Northwich 2, Walsall 2; Peterborough 0, Cheltenham 0; Plymouth 5, Fulham 0; Preston 4, Altrincham 1; Runcorn 1, Darlington 4; Scunthorpe 4, Rotherham 1; Shrewsbury 1, Scarborough 1; Stevenage 2, Hayes 2; Stockport 2, Doncaster 1; Sudbury 0, Brighton 0; Swansea 1, Bristol City 1; Torquay 0, Luton 1; Whitby Town 0, Hull 0; Wisbech 1, St Albans 2.

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: Aston Villa 1, Leicester 3; Blackburn 1, Chelsea 1; Derby 2, Middlesbrough 1; Everton 7, Southampton 1; Man Utd 1, Arsenal 0; Newcastle 1, West Ham 1; Sheffield Wed 2, Nottingham Forest 0; Tottenham 2, Sunderland 0; Wimbledon 2, Coventry 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Newcastle (played 13, points 28); 2, Liverpool (12-26); 3, Arsenal (13-25).

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE: First Division: Bolton 2, Crystal Palace 2; Bradford 2, Ipswich 1; Grimsby 1, Stoke 1; Norwich 1, Reading 1; Oxford 1, Huddersfield 0; Portsmouth 2, Man City 1; Port Vale 0, Sheffield Utd 0; Q P R 1, Charlton 2; Southend 2, W B A 3; Swindon 3, Barnsley 0; Wolves 1, Birmingham 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Bolton (18-38), 2, Crystal Palace (18-34), 3, Norwich (18-32).

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE: Premier Division: Aberdeen 3, Dundee Utd 3; Hearts 0, Hibernian 0; Kilmarnock 2, Motherwell 4; Raith 1, Dunfermline 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Rangers (12-29), 2, Celtic (12-26); 3, Aberdeen (12-10).

First Division: Airdrie 0, Falkirk 1; Clydebank 1, Partick 3; Dundee 0, St Johnstone 1; Stirling Albion 2, East Fife 1; St Mirren 1, Morton 0. **Leading positions:** 1, St Johnstone (13-26); 2, St Mirren (14-23); 3, Falkirk (14-23).

Second Division: Berwick 1, Livingston 2; Brechin 1, Clyde 2; Queen of South 1, Hamilton 1; Stenhousemuir 0, Dumbarton 1; Stranraer 0, Ayr 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Ayr (14-32); 2, Livingston (14-31); 3, Hamilton (14-28).

Third Division: Albion 1, Queen's Park 1; Cowdenbeath 2, Arbroath 2; East Stirling 2, Alloa 2; Forfar 3, Montrose 1; Inverness 2, Ross County 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Cowdenbeath (14-24); 2, Albion (14-24); 3, Inverness (14-23)

Tennis

Title stays with Henman

Stephen Bierley

WHAT has been a remarkable year for Britain's No 1 Tim Henman ended in triumph on Sunday with a 6-7, 7-6, 6-4 win over Greg Rusedski in the men's final of the British National championship.

Rusedski played well despite pulling a muscle in Saturday's semi-final, but Henman has fast developed a gift that all the top players possess — the priceless ability to come up with winning shots on the big points.

Henman might yet play in the Grand Slam Cup in Munich next month. He is currently one of two reserves and will receive £30,000 for not lifting a racket.

In truth he probably hopes that nobody drops out between now and early December, for he is in obvious need of mental and physical rest.

Several times in this tournament Henman's mind was clearly wandering off to quieter pastures. Since he reached the semi-finals of the ATP Tour's Ostrava tournament last month the road has been bumpy and hard.

"But that's life, that's tennis," he said. "It was not something that suddenly went drastically wrong. I lost to some very good players. You cannot always have things your own way on court, and it's the same mentally. At times I was battling against myself."

A short final looked in prospect when the injured Rusedski had his serve broken in the third game, but Henman immediately had difficulties with his own serve. It has improved enormously this year, becoming a genuinely potent weapon of world class, but his percentage of successful first serves remains erratic and it was a double fault that allowed Rusedski to square immediately.

Rusedski went on to take the tie-break 8-6. Henman responded by taking a 2-0 lead in the second set, but then squandered the lead for a second time.

Rusedski, having lost here to Henman last year and then been beaten by him again in Ostrava, had promised a new game plan this time, and Henman's forehand was duly put to the test.

It made no difference in the end. Rusedski made no excuses for his back. "It was difficult to stop, start and turn but I had more mobility than on Saturday," he said.



Henman: in need of rest

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Botham is back

ENGLAND have added the name of Ian Botham to their cricket tour of Zimbabwe and New Zealand this winter. He will act as technical adviser to the team. The former all-rounder had shown interest in the England set-up for some time. Last season he was touted as a team "motivator", but the idea was slapped down by Raymond Illingworth, then chairman of selectors. Now Botham has been brought in by David Lloyd, who has taken over as England's full-time coach. He said: "I have wanted Ian to be involved with us for some time. This winter we will be using his technical skills."

"A lot of games are won and lost in the attitude of the guys on and off the field," said Botham. "We need to be more positive. David has been working in that direction and I'll try and help."

Botham: technical role

TOURING England A team beat the Australian Cricket Academy by seven wickets at Mount Gambier on Monday. The home side resumed their second innings on 70 for two, 56 ahead but quickly found themselves in trouble. They were bowled out for 175, with Andrew Harris claiming 5-65. Michael Vaughan scored 70 to give England a solid start. Owais Shah hit an unbeaten 43 to steer the tourists to their victory target. (Scores: Academy 258 and 175. England A 272 and 165 for 3).

ARSENAL'S season is progressing with familiar consistency. They are in the top three of the Premiership and last week the Gunners went all guns blazing into their third-round Coca-Cola Cup replay against First Division Stoke City. Although they found themselves a goal down at Highbury, their resilience, adaptability and their ability to punish naïve defending saw them comfortable 5-2 winners at the final whistle. Wright, labelled by new manager Arsene Wenger as "the most efficient goalscorer I have ever seen", got two of the goals while Platt, Bergkamp and Merson chipped in with one each. Sheron scored the visitors' two goals.

But Arsenal face a much tougher opposition in the next round when they meet Liverpool. Roy Evans's team were also involved in a replay and disposed of Charlton Athletic 4-1 at home.

Coventry's new manager Gordon Strachan was thwarted in his attempt to get the team off to a winning start by a late goal from Second Division Gillingham, which dumped his side out of the competition.

THE threat of a strike by Nationwide League players has been averted after clubs agreed a new cash deal with the Professional Footballers' Association. Under the agreement, the clubs will pay the union £750,000 a year for five years, the first payment going on benevolent packages, insurance and education. A further £600,000 will be spent annually on projects to be decided later.

MARK BOSNICH, the Aston Villa goalkeeper, last week paid a £1,000 penalty for a Hitler salute which angered Tottenham Hotspur supporters — many of whom are Jewish — during his side's match at White Hart Lane on October 12. The 24-year-old Australian international was fined by a Football Association disciplinary panel after being found guilty of misconduct. Bosnich, who apologised for his action, said later: "I abhor racism. The best thing to come out of this is that maybe it has raised awareness of it."

FORMER England football coach Terry Venables was expected to sign a deal on Tuesday to coach the Australian team through the Oceania group in its bid to qualify for the 1998 World Cup finals. His £200,000-a-year salary is 30 per cent more than he got for his England job and requires him to spend only four months down under. Venables will keep his job as director of football at Portsmouth.

BRITAIN'S top sports competitors are to receive up to £28,000 annually in "lifestyle support" from a £40 million-a-year scheme funded from lottery money. The scheme will be a boon to top-level sport, ensuring that competitors at national and international level will not have to take up part-time jobs or struggle on state handouts as they prepare to represent their country. The Sports Council plan will assist up to 4,500 élite performers from age 11 upwards. A further £20 million has been set aside to pay for coaching and scientific advice.

SIX South African Rugby Union players scored tries as their side recorded a 44-21 victory over Argentina in the second and final Test at Buenos Aires.

ITALIAN middleweight boxer Fabrizio de Chiara, aged 25, died after collapsing at the end of a 12-round title fight with Vincenzo Imparato in Massa, Italy. His death coincided with the announcement that women and girls over 10 will be allowed to fight as amateurs for the first time in Britain.

LEON STUKELJ, the oldest living Olympic champion, celebrated his 98th birthday last week. He is only two years younger than the Olympic movement itself, and won his first medals at the Paris Games 72 years ago. Stukelj won three golds, one silver and three bronzes as a gymnast, and still practises on a pair of improvised rings in his flat in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Rugby Union Heineken European Cup quarter-finals: Cardiff 22 Bath 19

Bath's pride is given a mauling

Robert Armstrong

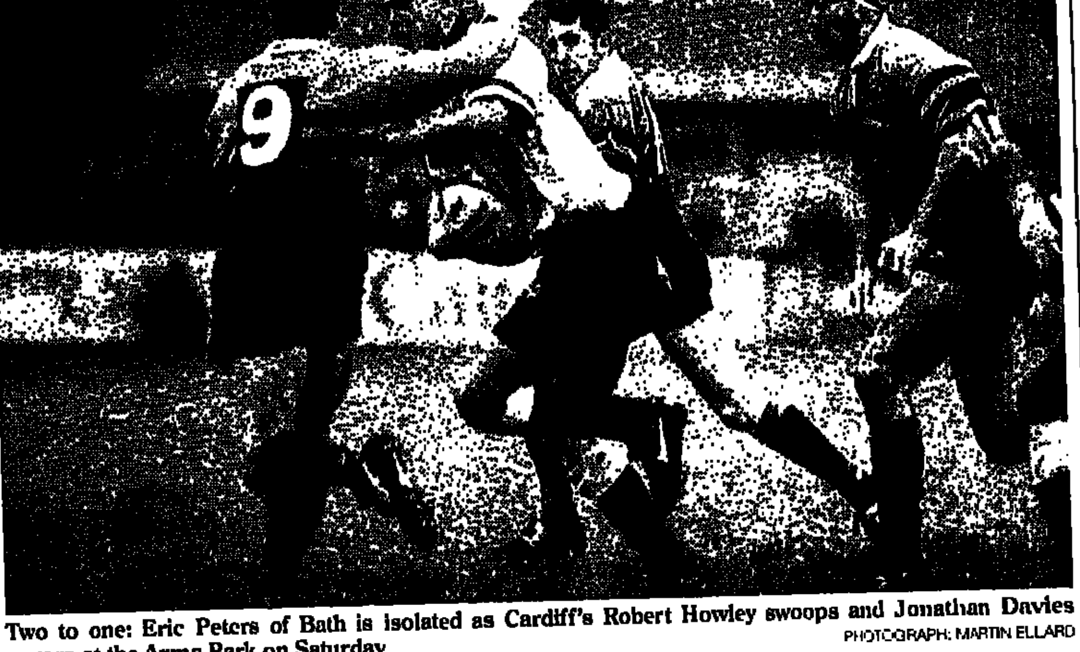
THE shock-waves of Bath's exit from the Heineken European Cup on the wings of a rousing Cardiff chorus of Bread of Heaven will reverberate throughout England and Wales for months to come.

While unjustly-maligned Leicester continued to fly the flag in Europe, Bath, the standard-bearers of new-age rugby, have been peremptorily despatched along with the vaunted London clubs, Harlequins and Wasps, who also sought to play a dynamic 15-man game in their first season in the competition.

According to John Hall, Bath's director of rugby, they will "take stock" of a knockout blow that will cost them up to £500,000 before deciding on measures to achieve consistent results. So far Bath have suffered three defeats in the league in addition to their devastating away-days in Pontypridd and Cardiff.

That series of set-backs constitutes a genuine crisis for the club, who in recent memory have never slipped so badly in the early months of the season. Their capacity to play the expansive game they espouse is found wanting each time they face a well-organised side like Cardiff, who mix controlled possession with shrewd kicking.

Bath's claim to be "the best club in Europe" had already become an albatross before they came to the Arms Park largely because their game plan looked naïve against other élite opponents.



Two to one: Eric Peters of Bath is isolated as Cardiff's Robert Howley swoops and Jonathan Davies covers at the Arms Park on Saturday PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN ELLARD

Hall admitted his post-mortem will focus strongly on "how we use possession", the crucial aspect of Bath's play that exposed their inability to turn pressure into points. For much of the game Cardiff carefully shepherded the English champions into harmless areas of the field where they found it difficult to unleash their strike-runners, notwithstanding a good supply of ball. Bath's only try by the flanker Nathan Thomas was not scored until the closing minutes.

Once again searching questions were asked of Mike Catt that the Bath and England fly-half struggled to answer. In sharp contrast to Cardiff's Jonathan Davies, who often stretched the Bath defence with astute punting, Catt seemed to have no coherent overview of his basic pivotal duties and instead favoured flashy miss-passes or risky breaks that were quickly smothered. The impression persists that Catt's true position is really inside-centre.

Bath's imminent signing of Steve Atherton, the South African Test lock, may be a sound long-term investment, but that acquisition does not address the immediate problem of how Bath intend to turn the screw on opponents from behind the scrum. Second-rate sides such as Bristol, who recently conceded 10 tries at the Rec, may have lulled Bath into a false sense of their own attacking capability.

Arguably, Hall's decision to leave out his key goalkicker Jonathan Callard left Bath no insurance policy once it became apparent that the Cardiff line was not for crossing. Catt did kick 14 points but crucially he failed with three penalties, any one of which might ultimately have taken the game into extra-time had it gone over. Near the end Ian Sanders's decision to run a penalty looked foolhardy.

Frequent changes in personnel have probably contributed to Bath's loss of cohesion, conveying the message that the management believe tactical shortcomings can be remedied by bringing in fresh faces. Hall has created a tricky problem, having assembled a quality squad of around 40 players, most of whom believe they should be first-team regulars. Bath have become a club without a recognisable line-up.

Terry Holmes, the Cardiff coach, may have been unduly modest when he said the leading Welsh clubs had proved they could compete on equal terms with their English counterparts. On Saturday Cardiff, with inspirational characters like Jonathan Humphreys and Robert Howley, looked capable of beating any side in Britain and most of those in France too, Nigel Walker clinching Cardiff's semi-final place with a marvellous opportunist try just before the hour, courtesy of a slick pass by Davies.

Lee Jarvis, a replacement for the injured Justin Thomas, put the game beyond Bath's reach with two towering penalties in the final 15 minutes.

Bath contrived to make the scoreline a bit more respectable with their late try but, in truth, nothing could soften this massive blow to their pride and reputation. As Holmes pointed out, Toulouse are the only club who can say they are the best in Europe because they actually won the cup last season.

Leicester 23 Harlequins 13

Tigers soar to great win

Ian Malin

THE northern hemisphere's version of the Super-12 tournament was designed to expand the horizons of Europe's players and expose them to different rugby cultures. It is ironic, then, that the competition's favourites are now Leicester, as unpretentious and English as a steak and kidney pudding.

Toulouse, still smarting from last month's 77-17 pasting at Wasps, will hardly relish a semi-final trip to Welford Road in January where they will face a pack described by Harlequins' coaching director Dick Best as the "best in Europe".

After the match Bob Dwyer, Leicester's cerebral Australian coach, joked about fielding Northampton's backs and his forwards in the combined fixture against Western Samoa next month. There was a serious message in the jest. Leicester, for all the virtues of their mighty pack, are still not quite able to play a convincing 15-man game.

Dwyer wants to make Leicester less predictable, and Neil Back, the explosive flanker who can be the missing link in the evolution of his coach's dream, will play a crucial role. But Back's homecoming was rudely interrupted after 33 minutes when he left the field clutching an injured hamstring.

Back's replacement, the Ireland A player Eric Miller, performed admirably in the second half as the Tigers put the visitors in one of their bear hugs, pinning them down in their own half, disrupting their line-out and slowing down the rhythm of a game which was not decided until the final minute when Rob Liley registered the deciding try.

Quins were left to rue missed first-half opportunities when they had the Tigers in a trap. Gary Connolly's loose pass with a two-man overlap wasted a chance to add to Dan Luger's exhilarating eighth-minute score. But Connolly can hardly be blamed. His strong, incisive running fashioned a try for Will Carling after the break, and he and Jim Staples were the pick of the Quins backs.

Harlequins, as Best admitted, had their hearts set on this trophy. "Now we're back to the humdrum of the league, which we really want to win for the first time. But we have expanded our style in this competition and learned a lot about ourselves."

Dwyer said: "I don't think we're too far off the quality of the bottom teams in the Super-12. This European competition will improve the quality of the Five Nations and it's forcing up the level of players."

Cryptic crossword by Fawley

Across
1 Town's almost put claim in for redevelopment (9)
6 Live and work packaging black music (5)
9 Turn north with hesitation? I'm lost! (5)
10 Congenial Italian is backing representative at one firm (9)
11, 22 It could pay to look after one's circulation (10, 10)
12 Fellow needs attention, giving cause for concern (4)
14 Have to retrain nag — a wild one? (7)
15 Test method of delivery usually employed? (7)
17 Ray has to smile after hearing a child (7)
19 Introduction of Spanish article passed over by puritan (7)
20 Beam, taking in start of comedy that's risqué (4)
22 See 11 across
25 Finished with some lines, given different orders (9)
26 I compete with second group of climbers (5)
27 Quickly goes over willing, initially faint (5)
28 This is terribly toxic — moan about classification? (9)

Down
1, 14 Periodical is much revised — scope's given for psychedelic articles (5, 9)
2 Poor Spooner's caught by two nouns he's never heard of (3-6)
3, 24 Gain court order for replacing roofing material? (10, 4)
4 Response to advertising a job — the sack? (7)
5 Pa crashes posh car in the river (7)
6, 13 Hit production for ageing hippies, perhaps? (4, 10)
7 Green stuff covering coastal features, we're told (5)
8, 23 Creating a scene by putting on airs? (9, 5)
13 See 6 down
14 See 1 down
16 Al expanded into recyclable packaging (9)
18 Nothing in edition of Milton provided illumination (7)
19 Endlessly show off neat contradiction? (7)
21 Belief held by sacred order (5)
23 See 8 down
24 See 3 down

Last week's solution

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